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FEBRUARY 1937

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GRIPPING SHORT
SHORT STORIES



THE MAZE MASTER by Captain Havelock-Bailie
The sandstorms came when they were needed!
THE FORBIDDEN FOREST by ANTHONY RUD
AND GUN NEWS, by Donald Stillman

**"I gargle
LISTERINE twice a day
and have had fewer
sore throats"**

Says Florence Sundstrom



**"It's slick for
giving quick relief
for sore throat"**

Says Ronald Pierce

**"I haven't had a cold
in the three years
I've been
using LISTERINE"**

Says Albert Herman



Listerine gargle kills millions of germs associated with colds and sore throats

IF you are a regular user of Listerine Antiseptic because you like the wonderful freshening effect, you've probably made this happy discovery: that you have fewer colds and sore throats—and milder ones—than you used to.

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Get in the habit of using Listerine Antiseptic twice a day—at least during the winter months.

See if your health is not better. At the same time note how much cleaner and fresher your mouth is—how much sweeter your breath.

LISTERINE
*The Trustworthy
Antiseptic*



LAMBERT PHARMACAL COMPANY, ST. LOUIS, MO.

Well of the Padres His Living Tomb



San Diego Reporter, Weak from Loss of Blood, Cheats Death in Ancient Shaft

"For nearly two hundred years this death-trap had awaited its human prey...that was the grisly thought uppermost in my mind, as I fought for life in the ancient crumbling mission well of San Diego de Alcalá," writes E. P. Lyle III.

"First, as I was climbing down to explore an opening at the water level, a loose tile struck me on the head; then the rickety ladder slipped, plunged me dazed and bleeding into the water.

"But I had clung to my flashlight and as the cold water cleared my senses, I

could see it shining under the surface. Paddling to keep afloat, I swung the light as best I could around the well. A rusted old pipe attached to the wall offered a hand hold, and was stout enough to hold me as I fought off growing dizziness from loss of blood, and climbed hand over hand to where my companions could reach me.

"They would have pulled a corpse out of that well if it hadn't been for the DATED Eveready batteries in my flashlight—batteries that were really fresh when I bought them months before I would certainly have lost consciousness and drowned before my friends could have reached the mission (a quarter mile away) and returned with rope and a *E. P. Lyle III* light."



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YES, BUT A DRY BATTERY ISN'T DRY. THERE'S A WET MIX INSIDE THAT MAKES IT WORK AS THIS MOISTURE DRIES OUT, THE BATTERY GETS STALE AND ITS LIFE IS SHORTENED AND YOU CAN'T DEPEND ON IT. THAT'S WHY THE EVEREADY DATE-LINE IS SO IMPORTANT

On sale the third Friday of each month

Top-Notch

Volume C

February, 1937

No. 2

A STREET & SMITH PUBLICATION

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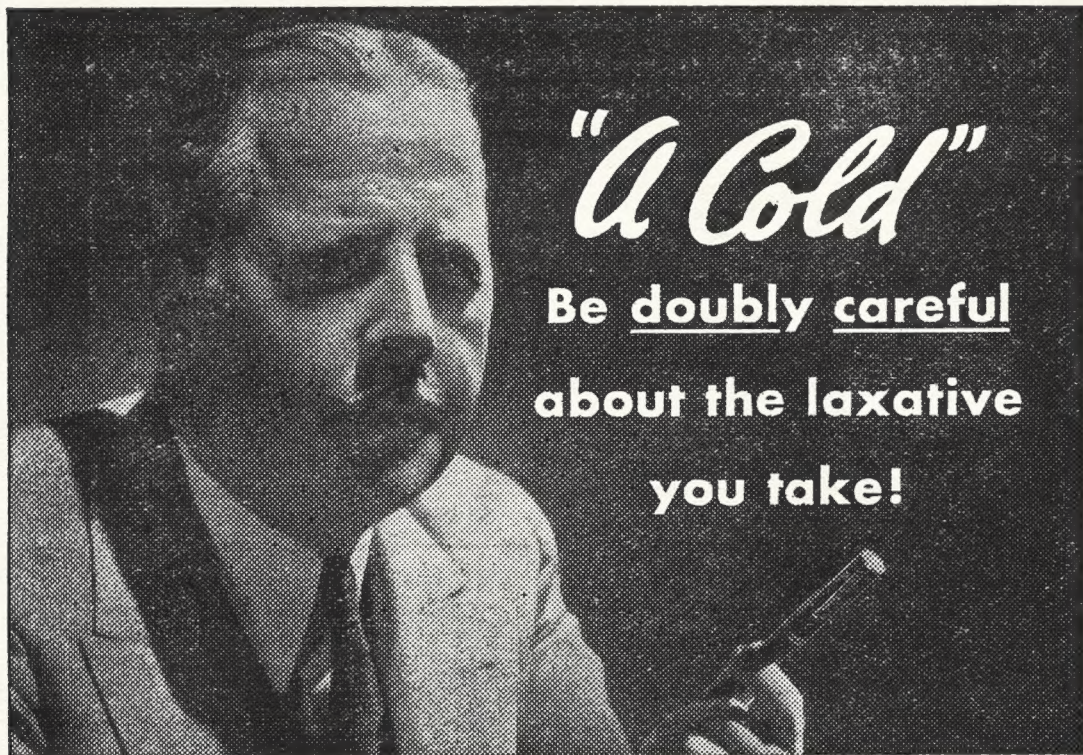
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STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC., 79 7th AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y.



"A Cold"

Be doubly careful
about the laxative
you take!

WHAT is one of the first questions the doctor asks when you have a cold? It is this—"Are your bowels regular?"

Doctors know how important a laxative is in the treatment of colds. They know, also, the importance of choosing the *right* laxative at this time. Before they will give a laxative their approval, they make *doubly sure* that it measures up to their own strict specifications.

Read these specifications. They are important—not only during the "cold season," but all the year round.

THE DOCTOR'S TEST OF A LAXATIVE:

- It should be dependable.
- It should be mild and gentle.
- It should be thorough.
- Its merit should be proven by the test of time.
- It should *not* form a habit.
- It should *not* over-act.
- It should *not* cause stomach pains.
- It should *not* nauseate, or upset the digestion.

EX-LAX MEETS EVERY DEMAND

Ex-Lax checks on *every* one of these specifications . . . meets *every* demand so fairly that many doctors use Ex-Lax in their own homes for their own families.

For more than 30 years, Ex-Lax has given com-

plete satisfaction, not merely to thousands of families—but to millions. Today it is used by more people than any other laxative in the world.

Anyone who has ever used Ex-Lax can quickly explain why it is so popular. Ex-Lax is thorough. But it is gentle. . . . It is effective. But it is mild. . . . It gives you welcome relief. But it spares you all discomfort. No nausea. No stomach pains. No weakness. That's why it's such a favorite not only of the grown-ups, but of the youngsters, as well.

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When Nature forgets—remember

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Arrest Him, Officer!

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That's the way to bring about healthy kidney activity and stop that bladder irritation which often causes scanty passage with smarting and burning as well as restless nights.

Remember, the kidneys often need flushing as well as the bowels, and some symptoms of kidney weakness are: Getting up once or twice during the night—puffy eyes—cramps in legs—backache and moist palms. But be sure and get **GOLD MEDAL Haarlem Oil Capsules**—the original and genuine—right from Haarlem in Holland—the price is small (35 cents), the good results will fulfill your expectations. **T**

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HOW A FREE LESSON STARTED BILL ON THE WAY TO A GOOD RADIO JOB

I HAVEN'T HAD A RAISE IN YEARS -- GUESS I NEVER WILL -- I'M READY TO GIVE UP

BUCK UP, BILL, WHY NOT TRY AN INDUSTRY THAT'S GROWING -- WHERE THERE'S MORE OPPORTUNITY

MARY'S RIGHT -- I'M NOT GETTING ANYWHERE. I OUGHT TO TRY A NEW FIELD TO MAKE MORE MONEY

LOOK AT THIS -- RADIO IS CERTAINLY GROWING FAST -- AND THE NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE SAYS THEY TRAIN MEN FOR RADIO RIGHT AT HOME IN SPARE TIME

I DON'T THINK I COULD LEARN RADIO THAT WAY -- BUT THEY'LL SEND ME A SAMPLE LESSON FREE. GUESS I'LL MAIL THE COUPON AND LOOK INTO THIS

Yes, I will send my First Lesson FREE to show how easy it is to TRAIN AT HOME FOR A GOOD RADIO JOB

SAY -- THIS WAY OF LEARNING IS GREAT. I'M GOING TO ENROLL. THEN I CAN BE A SET SERVICING EXPERT -- OR GET A JOB IN A BROADCASTING STATION -- OR INSTALL LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEMS. THERE ARE A LOT OF GOOD MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES IN RADIO



**J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute**

Do you want to make more money? I'm so sure that I can train you at home in your spare time for a good Radio Job that I'll send you a sample lesson absolutely FREE. Examine it, read it, see for yourself how easy it is to understand even if you've never had any technical experience or training.

Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers, and pay up to \$5,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays as much as \$200 to \$500 a year. Full time Radio servicing jobs pay as much as \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts own and operate their own full time or part time Radio sales and service businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to \$6,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay and see the world besides. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, and loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises many good jobs soon. Men I have trained are holding good jobs in all these branches of Radio.

Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

Practically every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets. They show you how to do Radio repair jobs that you can cash in on quickly. Throughout your training I send you plans and ideas that have made good spare time money—from \$200 to \$500 a year—for hundreds of fellows. I send you special Radio equipment and show you how to conduct experiments and build cir-

cuits which illustrate important Radio principles. My Training gives you practical Radio Experience while learning.

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In addition to my Sample Lesson, I will send you my 64-page Book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." Both are free to any fellow over 16 years old. My book describes Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Training in Radio and Television; tells about my Money Back Agreement; shows you actual letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Find out what Radio offers YOU! MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope, or paste it on a penny postcard—NOW!

**J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 7BD5
Washington, D. C.**



YOU SURELY KNOW RADIO. MINE NEVER SOUNDED BETTER

THANKS. I'VE BEEN STUDYING ONLY A FEW MONTHS AND I'M ALREADY MAKING MONEY IN MY SPARE TIME. THAT'S \$10 EXTRA THIS WEEK



OH BILL, I'M SO GLAD YOU SENT FOR THAT FREE LESSON AND PROVED TO YOURSELF THAT YOU COULD LEARN RADIO AT HOME

SO AM I. I'M MAKING GOOD MONEY NOW AND WE HAVE A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD IN RADIO



**J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 7BD5, Washington, D. C.**

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send the sample lesson and your book which tells about the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please Write Plainly.)

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- 2- Will I like the work?
- 3- Can I learn Drafting readily?

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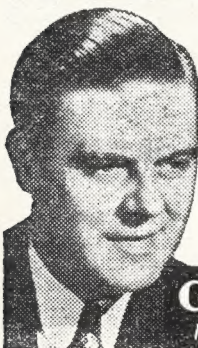
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"I have REDUCED MY WAIST 8 INCHES WITH THE WEIL BELT"

... writes George Bailey



"I suddenly realized that I had become a 'fat man'. The boys kidded me about my big 'punch'."

At parties I learned that I had become a "wall flower". Nobody wanted to dance with me.

In a bathing suit... I was immense. The day I heard some children laugh at me I decided to get a Weil Belt.



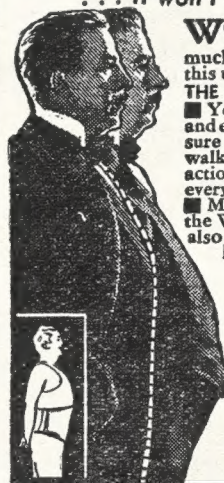
What a change! I looked 3 inches slimmer at once and soon I had actually taken EIGHT INCHES off my waist... and 20 pounds off my weight!

It seemed to support the abdominal walls and keep the digestive organs in place... and best of all, I became acceptable for insurance!

I have a new enjoyment of life... I work better, eat better, play better... I didn't realize how much I was missing!

IF YOU DO NOT REDUCE YOUR WAIST THREE INCHES IN TEN DAYS

... it won't cost you a penny!



We have done this for thousands of others... we know we can do as much for you... that's why we make this unconditional offer!

THE MESSAGE-LIKE ACTION DOES IT

■ You will be completely comfortable and entirely unaware that its gentle pressure is working, constantly while you walk, work or sit... its massage-like action persistently eliminating fat with every move you make!

■ Many enthusiastic wearers write that the Weil Belt not only reduces fat but it also supports the abdominal walls and keeps the digestive organs in place... and with loss of fat comes increased endurance, pep and vigor!

IMPROVES YOUR APPEARANCE

■ The Weil Reducing Belt will make you appear many inches slimmer at once, and in 10 short days if your waistline is not actually 3 inches smaller... 3 inches of fat gone, it won't cost you one cent!

Don't Wait. Fat is Dangerous

■ Insurance companies know the danger of fat accumulations. The best medical authorities warn against obesity. Don't wait any longer, act today!

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Gentlemen: Send me FREE, your illustrated folder describing The Weil Belt and full details of your 10 Day FREE Trial Offer.

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MANY NEVER SUSPECT CAUSE OF BACKACHES

This Old Treatment Often Brings Happy Relief

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

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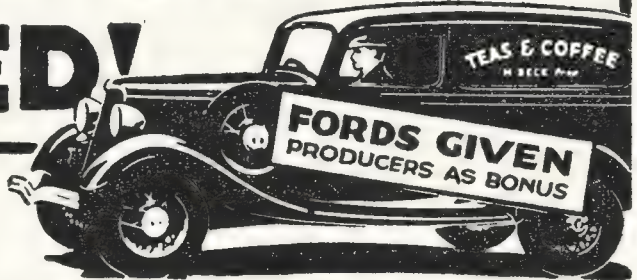


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The FORBIDDEN

*Let them stay far from
it—or die! It was no
proclamation—just
grim resolution*

ONLY TWO MILES of the cypress swamp had been traveled since the dawn fires. Yet a hazy sun, which drew steam from the spongy flat, had reached the ridge with its nodding pine tops. On that ridge had clustered the wagons, where the westbound pioneers had made their last



*The first yoke of
oxen scrambled out
part way. The
wagon slanted
down—*

by

FOREST ANTHONY RUD

night encampment before reaching the land promised to them by the great scout and guide, Samuel Dale.

Alabama. There we shall rest.

Now the wagon train had reached the Great Bend of the Tombigbee River. The thirsty horses drank. A querulous uproar arose from the wagons. Babies

squalled. Men and women, tired to the very marrow of their brains by the long journey, snapped at each other in the long-drawn impatience of their strained nerves.

Four leagues more? That had seemed no more than one final dawn to dark of toilsome striving. And so it would have

been in the drier flatwoods through which most of the trip had been made. Here, with marshy hills, and still more boggy branches at the bottoms of the valleys dividing the hills one from the next, any forward progress at all of the overweighted train assumed the aspect of a man-made miracle.

Except for that kindly but indomitable young man, Sam Dale, the settlers would have given up, and contented themselves with poorer holdings in the forest, many days ago. Dale made them travel. It was his creed, after he had accepted their offer of gold as a guide to any named destination.

Back there on the seaboard, the bronzed, handsome Dale—with his coal-black mustache, worn after the Spanish fashion, his buckskins; his reputation as the only white man feared and respected by Chief Pushmataha of the bloodthirsty Choctaws; Chief Red Eagle of the Creek Nation—the half-breed Scot, William Weatherford, who was to cause Andrew Jackson so much trouble in a few years—and by the millionaire fur trader Alexander McGillivray—back there Dale had been a popular hero. All the more because he was silent, never boasting.

But the hardships of the long trail into Alabama had acted upon the cantankerous individualists of pioneers. They were a tough lot anyway, men who could not get along. They always hoped that somewhere, just ahead, they would find a land where they could establish themselves without much work, and grow rich.

That never happened. The pioneers had to work far harder, for much less, than those who stayed behind. But the men who broke the new lands at least got their fill of excitement.

Dale had warned them that Alabama was a doubtful place for settlement. The land was probably no better, even if it was free. And the fact that the Acadians—transported from Grand Pré,

Chignecto and Port Royal in the far-north Land of Evangeline in 1752—had now intermarried with the fierce six-foot Choctaws, complicated matters.

Naturally, the Cajuns, as these exiles now called themselves, hated other white men—especially those who gave lip service of loyalty to the hated English king. For a few years now the Americans had been free of the English yoke, and had a nation of their own. The Cajuns still stubbornly refused to see any difference.

English or American, what difference? Let them stay far from our forest—or die!

That was no proclamation, just a grim resolution. Sam Dale suspected something of the kind, but did not know the real depth of desperation and hatred which inspired it.

THE MARSH through which they had floundered this morning had seemed the unbearable, final hardship to the pioneers of Dale's wagon train. From floundering in the iron-red muck, the oxen were gory to their shoulders. They puffed, heaved, and stodged forward against their creaking yokes, with men women and children straining at the high wheels to help.

Here were all the loathsome things of the subtropic swamp: coral moccasins, beautiful, slim and deadly; cottonmouths too fat to move, or even to strike effectively at anything higher than three inches above the mire; ten-foot whip snakes and black racers, raising their nonvenomous heads a full yard from occasional palmetto clumps; marshmallowy diamond-back rattlers, which here grow to their greatest size, raising their ugly, pitted heads like beef hearts, and whirring their castanets of tails; and through the breathless, humid bog an occasional heavy splash, as a bull alligator submerged to inspect his cache of carrion.

Terror of this awesome portal to their

land of promise attacked the women and girls of the long train, and even brought fearful side glances into the green murk of the jungle from some of the men. They glanced with fascinated expectancy into the tunnels under the huge live oaks, where dripping, motionless gray stalactites of Spanish moss hung from great heights to brush the ribbed canvas of the wagon tops.

Painted savages watched. They all knew that, and tried to push their blunted glances far into the tangles of Choctaw rose, anise, holly, laurel, cypress, tamarack and wild huckleberry. They whispered questions among themselves, then flung querulous demands at the broad-shouldered, black-eyed man who led the train. When he ignored this, they screamed in sudden hysteria, making him turn, at last, with his grave gesture commanding silence.

"If the Choctaws hear such voices, they will deem ye afraid," was Dale's grim warning. "Injuns kill recklessly when they feel contempt for cowardice in a foe!"

That silenced them for the time. Teeth grated with the inner fury which came to them, for the deadliest insult to these swaggering, ignorant fellows was to hold even the slightest doubt of their courage and capability as fighters. Sooner or later, when this trip was done, they'd get back at Sam Dale. See if they didn't!

Long since, Dale himself gladly would have forfeited his fee as scout and guide, to be quit of these fools. Once or twice, worn down by the bickerings and dissatisfactions, he had been on the point of leaving them. All that would have been necessary would have been to quicken his pace to that mile-eating stride of silence—his forest gait when unhampered by duties to others.

Each time he had restrained the impulse, and his naturally hot temper. At one night camp, however, a place where now stands the thriving town of Anda-

lusia, Alabama, he had laid aside flint-lock, powder horn, knife and deerskin shirt, to wallop to within an inch of his worthless life, a loud-mouthed dissenter who stood a full five inches taller than Dale's six feet one.

For two days that discipline sufficed—at least while the erstwhile dissenter rode groaning in the wagon with the women. But now that they neared the end of their long trip, had entered the country of the Choctaws and Cajuns, whom Dale respected, they became insubordinate—and worse.

They forgot that this choice of location for future homes had been made by themselves, against the calm advice of this man who knew the natives of the piny woods as well, or better, than any living white man knew them. Of course, Sam had consented to lead them to their goal, when it became evident they would go anyway. They had been safer with him than with most. But all this was past. They blamed him bitterly, now that the nearer they came to the tall forest of which they had heard, the more unattractive the land seemed. All red clay and sand here. And almost bottomless bog. Why could he not have told them of this, rather than harping constantly upon the dangers from Choctaws, Creeks, Yazooos, Taensas, Chickasaws—and Cajuns?

When he had doggedly recommended either the Coosa or Tallapoosa River, instead of this Tombigbee on which they had set their hearts, why had he not said that corn grew better there, rather than that there were fewer Indians, and no Cajuns?

Sam Dale was judged vindictively by pig-headed men who now believed he had cheated them and led them astray. They yelled hysterical threats. Dale had got them, against their will, into this swamp jungle; and he had better get them out to a fertile highland right away, if he valued his fee—or his very life!

THIS late morning Dale's black, wide-set eyes were expressionless, unrevealing, save for fugitive, darting gleams of fire. This was hot temper, held in leash by iron will. For this last day he would hold on to himself.

He watched the dim trail, the slight-marked central path, trodden first by padded feet, then by moccasins, and now overlaid with the faint traces of the two first trains he had guided through. His eyes, restless and alert, searched through the scrub, watching for a slight, telltale swaying of a bush, which could have but one meaning on this breezeless morn. Cajuns. The Indians were too great masters of woodcraft to reveal themselves unless they intended to do so. Cajuns, however, lacked that uncanny skill which is granted only by numberless generations of woodland living.

Then, technically, in this year of 1800, the Indians were at peace with white men. The latter had taken pot-bellied old Chief Pushmataha of the Choctaws to Washington, made him a brigadier general, and given him a uniform jacket with much gold braid, epaulets, and a silk hat—since he liked that better than the regulation officer's hat.

He had taken Washington by storm, appearing at formal functions in silk hat, dress jacket, loin cloth and moccasins. And since then he was supposed to be a friend; though it was still wise to keep your powder dry—and plentiful—when you took a wagon train rich in plunder, through the center of his forest domain.

Now, amid vocal tumult, the lead wagon of the train came to new trouble. The four span of oxen floundered into a boggy branch which Dale had crossed on foot by utilizing a fallen log. The beasts snorted and thrashed, plowing for bottom. For several seconds wild confusion reigned, with the long bull whip crackling, and blistering oaths coming from the throat and lips of the driver.

Then the first yoke of oxen scrambled out part way, and, by sheer strength of haunches, dragged their following yokes from a similar predicament. The wagon slanted down and followed.

It went into the water and soft mire like a battleship nosing from the waves. The front wheels sank, disappeared. A twelve-year-old boy, who sat beside the driver, half asleep, toppled forward unnoticed. The blaspheming driver was clutching for his own hold, trying to ply the whip effectively, and lifting his boots to escape the mounting muck which seemed about to engulf the whole wagon. Black and red in clownish streaks, from the bubbling, ferrous mire, the lad, choking and sputtering, managed to cling and climb back, saving himself, but the wagon was stalled.

From the rear came exasperated cries, filthy oaths which, once upon a time, even these rough men would not have vented before their womenfolks and children, but which now had become as much a part of routine as the swinging of the ox goads.

The lead wagon was mired down. Before the others could proceed, the laborious task of felling trees, of jacking up and dragging out the wagon would have to be accomplished. How many dozens of times this had been done!

"Dale's brung us this way so's we'd build bridges for the next train he wants to guide!" yelled one infuriated weakling.

Dale came back, calm-eyed, uttering no word of denial or reproach. He took charge, disregarding the babel of sneering hate. When the tree felling was well under way, he recrossed the fallen log and disappeared in the leafy thickets beyond. Within a mile this swamp and thicket vegetation yielded to higher ground, and the tall, silent aisles of primeval long-leaf yellow pine.

THE GUIDE dreaded this ten-mile stretch of forest, and with good reason.

He intended to skirt it if he could, for herein dwelt Cajuns. With all his woodcraft, he crept silently toward the faint wagon road debouching upon high ground.

It immediately became apparent that there was no other way—unless they retreated through the slough and made a terrible detour. The pioneers would not stand for that, and there was no use considering it. Straight ahead—and hope for the best!

But that second he stopped, chills chasing his spine. From the last of the huckleberry covert he had discerned a sign, one which brought a nervous contraction to even his corded strands of muscle, and a breathed expletive to his lips.

Right there in the middle of the faint trail projected a pair of long sticks. The scarlet sticks of Cajun warning!

These were paired wands, reddened with the pigment of the October swamp maple. With ends thrust into the ground, the crossed sticks made a large and unmistakable X. Or, if you chose to look at them another way, a blood-red cross!

Sam Dale emerged from cover. The Cajuns knew of their coming, and attempt at concealment was useless. This was the end, not only for the course of this particular wagon train, but also for any other caravans he might wish to guide this way in the future. Without an escort of troops ready to engage in a bloody ambush battle under every imaginable disadvantage, no settlers could pass this spot—and remain alive.

With a sigh of grim dejection at the thought of retracing the two miles of heavy slough with these malcontents of men and women, Dale shouldered his musket and swung back. Facing these people was going to tax courage and resource to the full.

He reached the wagons just as the work of filling the draw with trunks and leafy boughs had reached an end. Oxen

of the first wagon were being spanned. Vocal tumult had lapsed in chronic sullenness and fatigue.

With his first grim words of regret came an instant heightening of the tension. Gaunt-faced, stoop-shouldered men stared incredulously. Grunts and curses of dismay came, mingled with excited whisperings, half-completed demands, and a shrill, sneering laugh of despair and bordering hysteria from one of the women.

And then a hell of understanding. Did Sam Dale mean to stand there and tell them, after all these days and weeks of harsh, furious striving, that they would be forced, by the Cajuns, to turn back?

He did. He was courteous but firm; for, in spite of all their ignorance and ingratitude, he pitied them. It was that bitterest of all disappointments, the denial of land hunger long endured, and it might well have made finer men than these break down into vileness and vituperation.

For just a little while, though, these weaklings were stunned. Many of them sank to the ooze uncaring for their garments, completely overcome, their lips and tongues spitting forth puerile curses, but their initiative crushed. They scarcely heard his substitute offer to guide them to any other part of the South, or even to return them to the Piedmont plain, whence they had come. He promised to stick by them in their trouble and hardship, until they found a country which suited. Perhaps a little farther to the south, down near the Chickasawhay——"

Just too late, Sam Dale caught the flash of movement behind. He dodged, snatching at the handle of his sheath knife with the instinctive motion of a woods fighter. At that same instant, however, came the *thunk* of a heavy blow.

With a single suspiration, curiously

like the sigh of a child in sleep, Dale tottered, then slumped forward, face downward in the muck.

II.

"THAT'LL SHOW HIM, damn his hide!"

Snarling his vengeful hate, Jed Praeter, the lanky cracker whom Dale had been forced to pound to a pulp for the sake of discipline on that former occasion, leaped toward the inert body. He swung aloft the loaded butt of a whip, poising for a second and finishing stroke.

Two men intervened, catching Jed roughly and carrying him back several steps.

"How'd we git *back* if ye kill him now?" demanded one of them, his snarl almost as nasally horrible as that of the intending murderer. "Wait till we're *nigh* back—or som'eres we want to drive stakes. *Then* do your damnedest!"

Discretion, not mercy, won the day. And yet, when they came to "argify" it all out in common council, they decided not to bother with Dale any longer. They would defy the Cajuns and drive ahead. After all, this was only a matter of a few more miles, and there was a faintly marked wagon trail.

Blood had cooled sufficiently so they did not even allow the malevolent Jed Praeter to bash out the brains of the man he hated. Probably this balking was due more to the fact that Jed himself was a bully, a boasting coward, and a ne'er-do-well, than to any particular consideration for the unconscious man. No one liked Jed.

They had not paid Sam Dale the fifteen dollars a head. Now they would just leave him there for the redskins or the Cajuns to find. No one could say they had murdered him!

If indeed he managed to survive, and came after them for the promised fee, they would meet him with defiance and

leveled muskets. He had not taken them to their goal as promised. Therefore, they would never pay him the money!

With no more delay, Jed Praeter led the way across the log bridge. When the tall, lanky cracker came to the crossed scarlet wands of warning he gazed at them, spat tobacco on them, and kicked them out of the way.

The wagons passed on into the silent aisles of pitch-glistening pine.

THE CREAKING of ungreased wheels and rubbing yokes had faded into the first hush of the forest before Sam Dale stirred. The fox squirrels, chattering gossipy *cha-cha-gweeks* to one another concerning that moaning, prone figure, had scampered down in curiosity, then hastily back into the trees. One of Dale's hands slid slowly forward from its wrist depth in the ooze, and touched the back of his head, where a swelling, throbbing lump had risen.

He was almost strangled by the mud in his face. Now he clawed it away, turned on his side, so he could breathe more freely. Consciousness slowly returned. With it, nausea. But his strength had survived many more damaging injuries, and so he finally sat up and looked about him, frowning to hold within bounds the splitting headache that he suffered.

Staggering erect, he made sure of his weapons, then made a slow way to the thin trickle of clear, flowing water in the center of the boggy branch. There he lay prone again, submerging his head until the coolness took away the ache.

They had left him his musket, knife and cumbersome pistol; but his powder-horn and bullets were gone. Also, his wallet with money and letters he had written, meaning to send to his brothers back in Georgia, when he met some one bound in that direction.

He saw the tracks of the train, and read them perfectly. So, they had de-

fied the Cajuns—and left their guide and protector behind, to die or recover as he would. Setting his jaws in determination, Sam Dale crossed the bridge and followed. Treachery to this guide and scout had been found unprofitable by white men, on earlier occasions; and if these plunderers were to escape his just wrath, the circumstance was fated to bring no joy to them.

Any moment and he would hear—
Yes, there it was! Borne along the verdure-tunneled branches as a muffled uproar, punctuated by flat sounds like the slaps of a switch in loose sand, the din of the massacre reached him presently.

He stopped. Even at this distance he could distinguish the shrill, screaming overtones of agony and terror, the in-



consequent poppings of muskets probably half aimed.

In all, there were not more than ten or a dozen shots. The Cajuns, therefore, must have employed arrows, much more effective because they could be loosed even more accurately at short range than a musket could be shot, and one arrow a second was commonplace with these men trained by the expert Choctaws.

In spite of Dale's just anger, a chill crept into his blood. Without powder or ball, he could be of no assistance, even if he saw any reason for fighting upon the side of these despicable ones who had downed him treacherously, flouting his trust and protection.

Then he suddenly growled, and swept forward at a faster pace. He had remembered two of the children; a wan-faced, wistful little miss with ragged curls, who had reminded him vaguely of his own youngest sister; and a rugged, freckle-faced urchin, who at twelve had seemed more of a man than his buck-toothed sire.

The way proved longer than he had expected, even making allowances for the speaking-tube qualities of the branch tunnels. Before he arrived in the forest glade where the attack had occurred, the sounds had faded into whispers, and died.

He saw the huddled shapes of dead upon the ground, the tipped wagons and slain oxen, through the trees as he came. There had been eight wagons. Only two were here. The other six wagons with the oxen were gone! This was strange, indeed. Dale circled cautiously, watching every tree trunk for sign of the foe.

IT BECAME PLAIN that no Cajun or settler was left alive upon the scene of massacre—at least, none in the glade. A moment later Dale learned that some one was not far distant. A long, raucous groan came to his ears.

The sound emanated from a thick clump of shrubbery behind and to one side. The scout peered long and suspiciously at this tangle. Could the Cajuns have known of his coming and set a baited trap? No. It would have been simpler just to wait and loose a shower of arrows as he approached.

He went slowly but steadily toward the spot from which came those hideous sounds.

He came upon a shocking sight. Beyond the screen of brush lay a pothole or honeycomb, one of those not unusual sinks in a land where bed rock is often hundreds of feet down from the surface. A man stood there, buried to his shoulders in the slime, and kept from sinking to immediate oblivion only by a few thorny strands of Choctaw rose he had managed to clutch. The vines were not strong enough to enable him to pull himself out—even had he been enough alive for the effort. They just sustained him, no more.

Covered with red mud, the man's identity escaped Dale—save that he seemed slightly familiar, and therefore must be a settler. Dale did not stop to worry about that. He had hated these fools, and had not cared that they were set upon and slaughtered.

But death in a stand-up fight, with the enemy defending his own home and freedom, is one thing; and slow suffocation in treacherous ooze decidedly another. Dale slashed down more of the climbing vine, twisted the strands into a crude rope, tied one end to the stanch trunk of a pitch pine, the other end to his own belt, and waded into the sink.

As he neared the unfortunate man, Dale saw that the appearance of familiarity was deceptive. This fellow was a Cajun, and he was in a more horrible predicament than even the scout had guessed. Clasped rigidly in his right hand, which also was looped over the sustaining withes, was the slender neck of a big-headed snake!

The serpent's jaws gaped in death, though its coils still encircled the man's arm. Under the pressure of that mighty, convulsive grip of clenched hand, the empty skin had come together where the snake's neck vertebræ had separated.

The man was too near complete unconsciousness to help himself at all. Cautious yet swift, Sam looped the saving thorns about the helpless Cajun. Then came several seconds of doubt, a time when it seemed that neither the woods dweller nor his intending rescuer would be able to win free from the muck. Finally, a sucking, reluctant sound. Dale reached footing of a sort on the pine needles. The rest was slow but sure. The two stretched out upon the firm bank, close to complete exhaustion.

Dale's hands were torn and bleeding from the thorns of Choctaw rose. He disregarded them, however, and closed his fingers upon the hot, angry right forearm of the Cajun. A deadly menace still threatened the life of the man he had saved.

The arm was not iron-hard with bone and muscle, but spongy and swollen. With the quickness of distaste, Dale pried open the clamped fist, and tore away the body of the dead moccasin. A washing in water revealed four punctures of the fangs. The arm was swollen red and purplish. The victim was drowsy, almost in that coma which would presage the end.

THE SCOUT might have wondered at himself, had he stopped to analyze that battle with death which had almost claimed its victim—and likely enough a worthy victim, too! He did not wait. One of his own rawhide laces, supplemented by a pad sliced from his own leather shirt, made a rude tourniquet which he drew cruelly tight.

More water, and a thorough washing. Straight slashes of his skinning knife

laid open the swollen arm, draining blood and venom from the tissues.

Meanwhile the Cajun stared dully from eyes dry and glassy, probably no longer feeling pain. Dale left him as soon as he could, and searched the surrounding thicket for yaupon holly. It was there, clustering about the sinks where snakes abounded—ready to neutralize their poison.

Breaking, rubbing the leaves and orange berries into a rough paste, Dale bound them about the bleeding wounds. When the arm was well covered, he scooped up plain muck, and poulticed over with that. This was the rudest sort of surgery, but it succeeded. The Cajun did not die.

Dale could not leave him for long at a time. The scouting he did in the vicinity had no result. The band of Cajuns with their captives—if any remained alive—and the ox wagons, had gone deeper into the woods. The trail led straight away in the direction Dale would have guided the train. The only slight reassurance he could find was the fact that there were no bodies of women or children left on the scene of the massacre.

Finding a pouch containing flint and steel in the effects of one of the dead settlers, Dale built a fire. Using a pot from one of the looted and smashed wagons, he brewed the famous "black drink," which the Indians made from this same yaupon holly.

This was a beverage reputed to have mystic qualities. As a beverage, except in cases of snake bite, it was of worse than doubtful value—being fatal to many people. The Choctaws used it to determine whether or not a very sick and troublesome brave was going to recover or die. Of course, he always died!

But this poison acted as a neutralizing agent for snake bite, and did help. Dale managed to get the sick man to swallow some. Shortly after that the man broke

into a profuse perspiration; his fever abated, and he passed the crisis. Dale made a rough lean-to, and carried his patient there.

The man lay passive. Undoubtedly he believed that Dale had saved his life for a grim purpose—that of making his captive taste the delights of some outlandish torture. It was a queer thing, but the Choctaws and the Muskogee tribes—and the Cajuns who intermarried with the redmen—never inflicted torture. The whites, and the Indians to northward, however, were different. It was one reason why, after a few bitter experiences, the southern Indians gradually tightened up their resistance toward invaders.

The Choctaws had been sunny-natured, kindly and hospitable. After the white men and their red allies taught them, and the great Chief Tecumseh traveled down from Illinois to show them the fine arts of fiendishness, however, the very name Choctaw became a shivering terror in the land. They were not too dumb to learn hellishness.

III.

DALE SET OUT the second day to find out what had become of the women and children. Using all his great woodcraft, he followed the plain trail of the ox wagons, keeping well away in the scrub, however, and flitting along silently.

Off the trail, each one hidden in a clump of trees and shrubs, were cabins. These were Cajun dwellings. Even those who had half-Indian blood still kept the habits, largely, of Acadia, preferring a roof to the skin tepee.

Dale lay in cover near the cabins, listening to the occasional sounds of human life. Once a party of four Cajuns passed within yards of his hiding place. They spoke in the mixed French and Indian, which was the parent of the still stranger Cajun patios of later years.

Dale gathered the gist of a sentence or two, but learned nothing of value to him.

At last he gave up. Circling stealthily, he raided a small truck patch, glean- ing a few raw vegetables which would have to suffice as rations. Then he returned to the lean-to, and shook awake his dozing Cajun patient.

"Your name?" he demanded sternly, speaking in French.

"Aristide Benier, m'sieu'," the other replied in a rumbling voice of hoarse resonance.

Dale nodded. "I am Samuel Dale," he said. "I shall take you back as a prisoner, to answer for the murdering of my people."

There was no heightening of emphasis in the statement. Nevertheless, the Cajun's eyes widened in horror. His skin paled to the hue of mold upon an orange. Death in one fashion or another he doubtless expected. To be dragged away, though, to face the indescribable awfulness of torture by these fiendish Americans, struck a shaft of unman- ning dismay to his very heart. Per- spiration of fear and weakness sprang to his forehead. Only by visible effort was he able to restrain the cry for mercy that tried to come to his lips.

"Your punishment will be considered small compensation, I fear," continued Dale sternly. "However, I must know one thing. Did your clan murder the women and children, also?"

This seemed to stiffen the captive. A sort of outraged growl came from his throat.

"We are of Acadia, m'sieu'!" he re- tortured almost scornfully. "We do not war upon the helpless! All those of tender age, and all women captured, were sent immediately to the fort taken by the Spanish.

"Thence they may be certain of help back to their own land. With them are all their possessions, even to the trinkets the women wore! We of Acadia ask

only that none molest us. We warn. Then we strike!"

Exhausted, he sank back, but his eyes did not lose their glow of pride. Probably it was the truth. Dale made his decision.

Taking this man back to a farce trial and certain death would help nobody. According to their lights the Cajuns had been justified. They had not asked to come to Alabama. Being dumped there by the British, when their land was ceded to England by France, they had made the best of their plight. Now all they asked was to be let alone.

"If I were of your people I should feel the same," said Dale aloud. "All right. When you are well enough, you may go free."

TURNING, to escape any possible thanks, he made his way back toward the Cajun cabins in the brush. If the women and children really were safe, he had only one personal account left. It was the one with Jed Praeter, the Georgia cracker. Praeter's body had not been among those slain and left at the scene of massacre.

In several hours of cautious reconnaissance Dale discovered three more male bodies transfixed by Cajun arrows. Jed Praeter and one other, a nervous, rather silly old man named Bogardus were now the only two names missing from the roll of slain.

As it was approaching sundown, Dale returned to his camp. The Cajun was gone! Within the lean-to of boughs the scout found, to his immense astonishment, a rather ancient flintlock musket, with powder horn and metal case of bullets, reposing upon a blanket of Choctaw weave! A small basket of withes, covered against insects, also came to light when he lifted the blanket. Within were ten hoe cakes, and the browned and tasty-looking cooked and stuffed bodies of four quail!

The expression of Dale's almost

opaque black eyes did not alter perceptibly, yet the scout hunkered down before the array and stared a full minute, before hunger pangs broke through his vast astonishment at this evidence of gratitude and he fell wolfishly upon the repast.

IV.

DEEP IN THE BRUSH of a sloping peninsula, which dipped into the swamp at the east, two separated, panting figures lay. One, wheezy of breath and still bearing the broken stub of an arrow in his shoulder, was a worn-out oldster.

His weak eyes dribbled continuous tears, though not of weeping. His restless talons of fingers plucked ceaselessly at the browned pine needles upon which he lay. This was old Hank Bogardus, silly patriarch of the ill-fated wagon train.

Unaware of the nearness of the other white man, a second wagon-train fugitive cowered motionless, only his terror-stricken, straining eyes revealing that life was still in him. Jed Praeter had arrogated to himself the leadership of the train, after striking down Sam Dale. The others, though despising Jed, had not thought it worth while to put him in his place, when only a few miles of travel remained. In single combat he had been feared and thought invincible, until the scout had curried him thoroughly.

But ability at rough-and-tumble fighting, and ability as a leader of other men when a death crisis loomed, were totally different things. To do Jed justice, he probably did not suspect the lack in himself. But when the first flight of arrows came from the silent ambush, and men dropped, gasping out their lives at Jed's side, he caved. There was no enemy in sight even to shoot! He fired off his musket once wildly, and then was too overcome by fear even to reload.

That massacre had taken only a few moments. And Jed Praeter had thought only of his own hide, after that first unaimed shot.

Now he lay there in his hiding place, clutching bayoneted musket, and staring through the thick screen of maroon-starred anise scrub.

The terrible Cajuns had missed sight of him. Would they trail? Jed's slack jaw quivered, and a low whimper of self-pity came from his shaking, bloodless lips.

A stir came in the other side of the leafy anise bush! Jed tensed, an unvoiced howl of terror causing his mouth to open, and his wild eyes to stretch to the full width of their sockets.

The Cajun-Indian trailers were following him!

Suddenly, the crouching cracker made his crazy decision. It seemed that there on the other side of the bush was just a single trailing Cajun. Gasping in breath, Jed leaped to his feet. With all his great strength, he hurled the bayonet-pointed musket straight into the heart of the moving bush! He was rewarded by a scream of agony! Jed instantly turned and ran blindly from the spot.

There behind him, old Hank Bogardus, transfixed with the long, triangular bayonet, sank down to gasp out the feeble remnant of life that had been left in his sorely wounded body.

JED RECOVERED some of his presence of mind with his first plunging step into that quaking, bottomless quagmire. He went down to one hip, saving himself only by a wild clutch at a projecting root. For several moments he clung, expecting to see the companions of that bayoneted Cajun dash into view, thirsty for vengeance.

None came. Jed finally hauled himself to the dry shore, shaken but still alive.

An hour later, desiring only to put greater distance between himself and the enemy—wasting not a thought upon the twenty-two helpless women and children who had been in his nominal charge—he began a slow, painstaking exploration. He shivered at the thought of returning the way he had come. Was there not some other path across the quagmire?

A long time later the fugitive, slime-coated to his shoulders, abandoned the search. As far as he had been able to determine, not a single pathway save the bottle neck of the peninsula—at which the massacre had occurred—offered escape.

Jed Praeter would not go near that blood-drenched glade again until driven by hunger. Though he failed to guess, it would not be the Cajuns, who now believed that every adult male of the wagon train had fallen, but a still more relentless enemy who would come, following the sign of his headlong flight.

Two nights and a day dragged past. Jed was chewing leaves and bark hacked from the shrubs. He munched mouthfuls of green dewberries, which offered little satisfaction. Even with the certainty of ultimate starvation facing him where he crouched, a long time passed before he could conquer his fears and make up his mind.

Only one chance offered: he must have a musket, with powder and lead. It was possible that such a weapon, with ammunition, might have been overlooked at the scene of massacre. He had to find it, or face the perilous and toilsome back trail, through a land of which he knew little, equipped only with a skinning knife.

He looked first for his own musket, approaching the spot with caution. Great luck! It lay there, its bayonet hidden by a billowing mound of black, neckless buzzards, engaged upon their ghoulish work.

Jed chased the carrion birds, and then saw his handiwork. Grinning a shaky imitation of scorn for the old man he had slain, Jed callously appropriated the veteran's few possessions. The powder in old Bogardus' horn was damp, yet it could be dried and made usable. And he had bullets.

Hearing no sound of Cajuns, and realizing that his panic had been caused by this unfortunate old fellow, Jed heartened considerably. He began to wonder if there was not some way in which he could avenge himself secretly and awfully upon that half-wild tribe of murderers. Poison a spring the Cajuns used, perhaps. Some coup, of course, which would let him get well on a homeward way before the effects became noticeable.

Annette Benier, a long-legged, overwhelmingly curious woods sprite of ten, gave the cracker his odious inspiration. In the excitement of her elders, which followed the battle massacre and the sending of the women and children prisoners to Fort Tehachicola, she had managed to slip away from her home, unseen.

Furtively, yet with her dark eyes flashing inordinate thrill and pleasure at the victory, she had scouted the grim scene of massacre, shaking her small fists at the motionless, silent bodies of the invaders.

So occupied was her attention that she stumbled straight into the fierce, jubilant grasp of Jed Praeter, before she guessed his lurking presence. A heavy hand clapped over her lips, checked the scream of fright. The only sound was a suppressed whimper, a rustle, and then the grunt of malevolent satisfaction from Jed.

Here was his vengeance, one which would furnish full scope for the satiation of his bestial instincts, and which promised no added danger to himself.

Quickly, he gagged and bound the

child with strips torn from her own dress. Dragging her to a sitting position on the ground at the foot of a live oak, he snatched down lengths of gray moss and bound them around her thin throat and waist. Then, with his eyes flaming with gloating cruelty, he drew the keen, skinning knife and whetted it upon the calf of one high moccasin.

"D' you know what I'm goin' t' do t' you?" he mouthed at the terrified girl. Of course she could not answer, but her round eyes testified to her horror of this American fiend.

Jed's knife, tested by the ball of one knotted thumb, cut circles in the air before the little captive's face. Even though he wanted to get away from this region as quickly as possible, Jed could not deny himself the added pleasure given by protracting the awful deed. He fainted several times, bringing the keen point and edge so close in upward slashes that they ripped through the child's flimsy garment.

A shudder swept her. She strained, then went limp, the dark eyes closing in merciful unconsciousness.

Jed growled disgustedly.

"I'm goin' t'——" he began again, then saw that threats were useless. The knife came up——

V.

THAT SECOND, strong fingers clenched themselves in the unkempt hair of the cracker's head. Jed felt himself jerked upward from his hunkering position, and thrown backward into the vine



thorns with a force which nearly tore his scalp from his cranium!

He yelled in a paroxysm of terror, certain that the avenging Cajuns had come.

The truth was even worse. When his frightened gaze encompassed the stern, crouching woodsman who waited silently for Jed to arise, the last semblance of manhood fled the cracker. This was Sam Dale, who had licked him fairly, and whom he had struck down unfairly and left to be scalped by Indians or tortured to death by Cajuns!

True, Dale voiced no verbal reproaches, yet his slitted eyes, his fighting crouch, with bared knife ready, spoke volumes. The moment Jed arose the woodsman would leap upon him, slashing murderously, killing his enemy. There could be no possible escape from the issue.

With a squeal like that of a cornered rat Jed attempted to scramble away on all fours. In three strides Sam Dale caught him.

"Get up and fight for your life! You damned child murderer, you don't deserve even that chance! Get up like a man or I'll cut your throat!" came the command of doom.

That much leeway was offered, yet Jed chose not to accept all of it. Perhaps he feared his quaking knees would not support him even for an instant in a standing position. Instead of rising, he gathered himself upon his haunches, then launched himself head down, his right arm, with the knife snatched again from the ground, describing a wide, upward circle as it aimed at Dale's chest.

The scout did not dodge back. Instead he came swiftly forward! One of his knees bent slightly to withstand the impact. His left hand seized and held the cracker's wrist and weapon.

Dale's own knife flashed. One swift, downward stab at the base of the skull, and a short shriek, instantly cut off as

the keen steel severed the spinal cord, and Dale's vengeance was complete. He stepped back, wiping his knife.

"The worst man I ever killed!" he muttered aloud, with loathing.

Without glancing again at the dead cracker, Dale released the unconscious girl child. He made certain that she was unharmed, except for fright and shock, then lifted her, still unconscious, in his arms. He made straight for the lean-to where Aristide Benier had also received his ministrations. Once get this girl awake, and she would take care of the matter of running home, all right.

Unfortunately for Dale, the way to the lean-to was exactly opposite to the direction the girl would have taken in going home. Dale had no warning at all. Like shadows, four of the golden-skinned warriors fell upon him, snatching away his burden and pinioning him, despite his desperate struggles, beneath the muscle and weight of three men—any of them almost a match for him.

Five minutes later, with arms bound and a noosed thong about his neck, he was forced to stagger away in the direction of the Cajun settlement. From the white-hot anger of the captors, he realized full well that he was to suffer not only for being an enemy, but for the stealing of an immature girl!

"Such a species of snake should be burned alive!" was one of the grated sentences in Cajun-Indian he understood.

VI.

ARISTIDE BENIER, returning empty-handed and worried from the first alarmed search he and two Cajun men friends had made for the missing daughter, found one of the cabins of the settlement besieged by a crowd of Cajuns. The girl had not just wandered away, as had been believed at first. She had been stolen by one of those dogs of

Americans, who had been caught as he tried to escape with the unconscious child in his arms!

No, she did not seem to have been harmed. She was at the home of her father. Would Aristide not go immediately, then return to hear the decision of the council in respect to the evidently degenerate prisoner? Even at the moment the fate of the thief and despoiler was being decided; and the services of Aristide would no doubt be needed. This time he could not grudge his duty.

The last grim reference was made to the distaste he professed toward the office of executioner, which three years earlier he had accepted unthinkingly. The Cajuns, though no longer using the guillotine, retained decapitation for major offenses. On one occasion they had borrowed from the Indians the even more awful means of burning at the stake.

Aristide, twice during his unwelcome term of office, had been called upon to wield the heavy meat cleaver upon the necks of condemned men. This third time he would have far less hesitation, if the savage growl which rumbled from his chest were any indication.

If but one hair of the child's head had been harmed, the despoiler would suffer twofold. Aristide would not grant even the quick mercy of a single stroke of the deadly cleaver, but let the American fiend taste pain instead of oblivion!

The judging was finished even as Aristide entered the dwelling to embrace his wife and the rescued child.

They had been forced to gag Sam Dale—not because he begged for mercy, but because he cried out passionately against the unjust disgrace alleged against him. Now, blindfolded and bound, he was forced to stagger forth, surrounded by outraged men and women, as implacably bloodthirsty, because of the offense, as so many Indians.

Dale was made to kneel at the low stump before the chapel. Aristide was summoned, the cleaver thrust into his willing hand, and he was brought to the spot for summary vengeance upon the invader who had sought to wrong his child.

A slow, stern voice was intoning, almost chanting the judgment, as Aristide Benier approached, rolling up his right sleeve—lest blood spurt upon his clothing. The assembled crowd fell silent.

"To thou, rightfully enough Aristide Benier," came the command, "falls the stern task of severing the head from the body, of speeding toward its æons in purgatory, this soul of a man too wicked for life upon earth!"

A terse, clipped sound came from between the Cajun's teeth, as he pushed through to obey the behest. He reached the stump, brandishing the eight-pound cleaver. Before the bowed figure he stopped, reaching forward to lift Dale's head for a stern searching of the living features of this degenerate one who would plan harm to one of the dear ones of Aristide Benier. As he did so, Sam Dale groaned sharply once, through his nostrils—not really a groan, but a command for still more concentrated attention. It was the only sound he could make, because of the voluminous gag crammed into his mouth.

The second the Cajun heard, and encountered the fierce, protesting gaze of those black eyes, from which the blindfold had been removed, tortured with the indignation and shame of being saddled with an unjust stigma, Aristide uttered a choked exclamation and sprang back.

"*This cannot be the man!*" he cried in horror. "It is all a mistake! I cannot kill this one! He——"

Instantly, the hush of expectancy was broken. A dozen voices broke into protesting clamor. They knew he had hated the rôle of executioner when forced to

play it on one of his own race. But this was altogether different! Not only was this fiend in human form one of the hated Americans, but he was a man who had threatened the little one of Aristide himself!

THE CAJUN frantically tried to remonstrate, to explain his own untold adventure with the snake, the mire, and the American who had come upon him and rescued him from the deadly predicament. In vain. The clamor of vengeful men and women drowned his words. Dale was condemned to die. Dog! Cur! Species of a cockroach! If the appointed executioner would not fulfill his task, let the women have Dale! Thinking of their own little ones, they would tear Dale to shreds and glory in the task!

At last Pere Mascaigne, president of the council, stepped forward, his upraised hand commanding silence.

"It is not for you to void the common judgment, Aristide Benier!" he warned in a cold, stern voice. "Obey the righteous verdict, and be at peace!"

For a moment the stalwart Cajun stood speechless, his proud features working. Then he swung abruptly toward Sam Dale.

"You have not wished to harm my little one—you, a *man*?" he demanded rapidly, giving his words a scornful emphasis—as if to say that Dale had already proved himself an exception among his countrymen, who had cut so poor a figure in the fight of the wagon train.

The same second, Aristide seized the gag, yanked it downward till it slipped beneath the captive's chin.

Dale's mouth was freed. He raised his head to meet the tortured gaze of the Cajun executioner.

"Before the living God, Aristide Benier, strike as you will, but *never be-*

lieve that Sam Dale thought of dealing harm to any of the helpless! I *saved* your girl from another of my own race, a renegade, as perchance she herself could testify!"

"It is all one—he or one of his countrymen! Kill the dog! Kill him!" chorused the voice of the small mob.

"Strike!" boomed the voice of Mascaigne, the president.

With one furious gesture of the cleaver, which threatened to decapitate some of those crowding in upon him, Aristide gained a second or two of silence.

"I will speak!" he shouted in his powerful, overwhelming voice. "I, Aristide Benier, know that this man could not have committed any such wrong! If he has been guilty of trespass, he has won back his life by——"

But there, on the very threshold of his revelation, even the Cajun's powerful voice was drowned. Only the commanding gesture of Pere Mascaigne was clear above the hubbub and turmoil. Dale must die!

Beside himself, Aristide pushed Sam Dale away from the stump, and leaped upon it.

"Hearken, idiots! Listen, fools of noise!" he screamed, still waving the cleaver to keep back those who would have rushed in to finish the captive with their own hands.

"Watch your comrade, Aristide Benier, die for the man who saved his life! With this sharp cleaver"—and here he shifted the heavy weapon to his left hand, at the same time stiffening his brawny right arm at the horizontal—"with this blade, Aristide Benier shall strike off the arm which would have to kill his friend, the man to whom he owes his life!"

In spite of the mob murder lust, this threat struck home. Aristide's dark eyes gleaming, his long hair tousled and

erect as a lion's mane, made an arresting picture. None doubted the word pledged before them all. The pride of woods folk, their simple code of honesty and honor, would carry him through. Doubtless he would strike unflinchingly, and stand there, waving them back from Dale's bound body with the bloody cleaver, until the last of life had spurted from his own arteries!

A doubt halted the resumption of their clamor. Why did this Cajun of their own clan shield a blood enemy? There must be a reason stronger than a mere distaste for capital punishment—since Aristide had bowed to the popular will on two former occasions.

THE CAJUN MEN and women muttered, glanced doubtfully from one to another. It was Pere Mascaigne who broke the stalemate.

"Tell what reason moves you to defend this dog of an American," he bade sternly.

Aristide's arm, holding the cleaver, swept down, but only to begin a series of explanatory, half-triumphant gestures. He knew that now he had won. From his lips, unrenderably fast, fell the tale of his mishap and adventure—and the strange fact that an enemy had not only saved him from the mire, but

had given first aid for the snake bite, and saved his life a second time.

At this point Aristide showed the still slightly swollen arm, the punctures of snake fangs, and the fresh wounds from which Dale's knife had drawn the venom.


Then it was that Dale told of the happening with Jed Praeter. Runners were dispatched to verify the fact that Jed's body lay there. And little Annette Benier was called. She could not identify Dale, had never seen the man. He was not at all like the one who had tied her and waved his knife at her—

Ten minutes later, Dale, armed and carrying provisions, started on the trail which would lead him to Tehachicola, and the women and children of the ill-fated wagon train.

"I have you to thank for my life," he said quietly turning and offering a clasp of friendship to the Cajun.

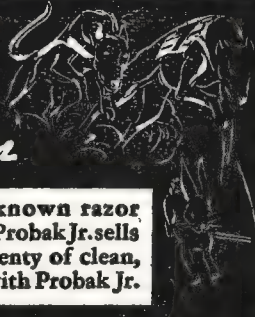
"The account is squared," returned Aristide almost mournfully. He made no attempt to accept the clasp. "Between us now must always be enmity. When you go, strong man, on the trail between us the red wands automatically raise themselves! It is farewell, Sam Dale!"

"Farewell!" spoke the scout solemnly, and stepped eastward on the trail to the fort.



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RIVER TRAP

*She was less than two feet long—but her log
was to be written in violence—and blood.*

by William Donald Bray

THE Spanish galleon's sails were a vivid blue. Her rigging was a golden maze of ratlines and stays. The hull glistened with a deep-mahogany hue.

She wasn't sailing the Spanish Main in the days of cutlasses, grog and pirates. She was just a model, held in the trembling hands of a white-haired man who sat on the steps of his fishing-pier shack. But even if she was less than two feet long, her log was to be written in violence and blood.

"River Joe" began to sense this as he bent over the model. "Pretend you're looking at this," "Pop" Mcfee whispered hoarsely. "Don't turn around—but there are two men, with a machine gun, on the roof right across the street. I've spotted them; but there are lots more watching."

Joe had noticed an ominous tension along Water Street, as he had walked up from his barge. The hurly-burly surge of life along the river was strangely still—and waiting.

"Don't worry," Joe tried to make his voice sound comforting. "Toothy won't come down here."

"If he does, I won't hide him," Pop declared vehemently. "I told him three years ago, just before he went away, that I never wanted to see him again. Now he's come back and done this and"—the old voice broke—"I'm ashamed to look anybody in the face."

Joe turned, unable to watch the misery in Pop's face. Joe's eyes swept down the street, studied the grimy fronts of

rooming houses and warehouses. There were two heads, just showing above the parapet wall of the brick building opposite, and two doors down, light from a street lamp glistened on a shotgun barrel that barely showed at a darkened window.

The water front was sewed up tight. Joe's hands clenched tightly. He felt all raw inside. Pop was a good egg. Pop was mixed up in one of those poignant dramas that are so often played out along the river. Often River Joe played an important—if unknown—part in these human crises, but there was no way he could help Pop.

It had begun nearly twenty years back, when Pop had picked up a dirty, homeless little waif on the street and raised him. The kid's big front teeth and his long, wolflike canines, had hung the name "Toothy," on him. Pop had tried to raise him right, but Toothy was a hellcat even in school. Petty thieving, clip gambling—he was a graduate in crime long before he had gotten in a stickup jam and left town.

But he had slipped back. For this evening the Sunset Canning Co.'s pay roll had been robbed. The three robbers had been masked; they had killed the cashier as he was filling the pay envelopes, but Toothy had been recognized.

And now the cops thought that Toothy, cornered, would come to Pop to be hidden. Which accounted for the machine guns across the street.

"I've been saving this model," Pop's



Too late, Toothy realized what was happening. He struggled savagely—

voice broke in huskily, "for you and Louise." He held out the Spanish galleon, but Joe suddenly started down the street. He had forgotten, in his absorption in Pop's problem, that Louise Archer was coming down to the barge. He had just seen her slim, erect figure under the street lamp at the corner.

"Get out of sight if trouble starts," he called back to Pop, and hurried toward Louise. He felt the warm glow that Louise always awoke in him. They were engaged; they would have been married before this—but the spinal injury that even now made Joe limp slightly had delayed the wedding bells. Joe felt that, in justice to her, he had to wait until he was healed. He thought too much of her to let her tie herself to a man who might always be a cripple.

He was hurrying so fast now that his back pained sharply. If Toothy did

show up, Water Street would become an inferno of screaming lead. He had to get Louise to safety.

A bakery truck turned in from Second Avenue, wabbling as it came around the corner. Joe's eyes fastened on the strained, white face of the kid driver and he broke into a halting run.

AS IF that had been a signal, Water Street exploded into violent action.

The kid driver shrieked, "Joe! Joe! He's in the back. He's got a gun on me."

Then the youngster jerked the wheel to one side and leaped. He sprawled as he hit the pavement, and that was the only thing that saved him. Orange streaks of fire darted out at him from the back part of the truck, but he was rolling away, by then, toward the gutter.

Joe reached Louise, dragged her to

the shelter of a brick doorway, as Toothy sprang from the covered back part of the truck into the driver's seat. Joe saw Toothy's rage-twisted features.

Then Toothy had slammed the truck into reverse, and shot it backward around the corner. Just before he got out of sight he leaned around the windshield, steadying a heavy automatic in his hand.

Joe had run out to help the driver. The kid yelled, "Look out!" and the two of them dived behind the base of a lamp-post just as the automatic roared.

Then Toothy was gone, before the cops down the street could get in more than one burst of ineffective machine-gun fire. Everything had happened with such lightning-fast speed that they hadn't spotted him until too late.

But the police had other cards to play. A squad car darted out of an alley, made the turn off Water Street into Second Avenue on shrieking rubber. And then—it was either Toothy's proverbial good luck or just one of those unpredictable happenings—a green sedan, its driver rattled by the gunfire, swung in front of the squad car.

Both tried to dodge, too late. There was a crash, the rasping sound of tearing metal, and the two cars were locked together in the gutter.

By the time the shaken cops got out, Toothy and the bakery truck were out of sight.

The truck driver was babbling to Joe, "I'd stopped at Mike's restaurant up Second. When I got back in something pressed into the back of my neck and Toothy says, 'Drive down to Pop's place. They're layin' for me but this will fool them.'"

People were milling out on the street now, shouting, asking questions. Joe had a question, himself, as he looked around.

That last shot of Toothy's. It had been carefully aimed and Toothy was known to be a dead shot. Yet it hadn't

clanged on the lamp-post base that he and the driver had ducked behind. It hadn't come close to them. Then what had Toothy been shooting at?

Joe examined the driver quickly, saw that he was only skinned a little from his dive off the truck, then ran to the doorway where he had left Louise.

She was gone!

River Joe felt his heart stop beating for an instant. He swung back, pushed through the gathering crowd around the driver, shook off a panting policeman who shouted questions in his car, and then he saw her on the steps of Pop's little house.

There was a bigger crowd there. An ambulance bell clangled above the other noises, as Joe ran closer. Then Louise pushed through the mass of people to Joe.

Louise Archer was a pretty girl, with character as well as beauty in her face. Usually she was poised, smiling, but now she was crying softly. Her tears fell on the blue sails of the model ship she held in her arms.

Joe led her away from the crowd, down Water Street. "He shot Pop?" Joe asked. He had already heard enough to piece together the story.

"Yes," Louise sobbed. "I saw him do it. It was when he shot around the windshield of that truck. I saw Pop fall; I *had* to run and see if I could help him. But he died just after I got there."

Joe growled under his breath. He had wanted to help Pop.

"Why—why did Toothy shoot Pop?" Louise went on. "The only friend he had left—"

Joe thought he knew, but he tried to change the subject for Louise's sake.

"The Spanish ship?" he suggested.

"Pop just gasped that he wanted us to have it, for—for a wedding present. That was all he said before, before—"

Joe was guiding Louise's stumbling steps carefully. They were nearly to the pier, where his barge was anchored.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw a man watching them, then he slipped back into the shadows of a doorway. Joe noted the stooped shoulders, the furtive air, the knife scar that ran down the man's neck from his right ear; then his attention was taken by a shout from another squad car that had just pulled in from Second Avenue.

"Toothy abandoned the bakery truck in an alley just three blocks up. We can't find a trace of him."

Joe and Louise had just turned off onto the dimly lighted pier by his barge, when an expensively dressed, tall man came hurrying up behind them. Joe swung around to face him.

"I'M ELTON KRUNSTON," the newcomer said. His cold eyes played over Joe superciliously. "I'm manager of the Sunset Co."

"Then it was your cashier that was killed, and your pay roll that was stolen," River Joe replied evenly. He didn't like Krunston's looks; he didn't like his manner; but he had long ago learned the value of not letting his feelings show.

"Yes," Krunston flared. "And the money will never be recovered, the way these fool police let Toothy play tag with them." He took a step closer and lowered his voice. "I need some *real* help. A thousand dollars, cash, if you'll help get the money back and tell me what you know."

"What makes you think I know anything?" Joe asked sharply.

"You do. You talked to Pop; you were around here at the shooting." He pointed to the Spanish galleon. "Besides, your girl took that away from Pop's house. What's in it?"

"Nothing!" Louise declared vehemently. She held the model closely to her. "Not the money—if that's what you're thinking of. Pop hadn't even seen Toothy in three years."

"That's what you say," the manager replied coldly. He glanced sneeringly at Joe's barge, the deck covered with secondhand pipe, furniture, machinery. There was a wide-enough variety of things there to completely equip a home or a machine shop.

"You don't mean to tell me you make a living out of this floating junk shop." Krunston sneered. "I've always suspected you had some graft on the side; a fence for stolen material——"

He stopped suddenly at the look in Joe's gray eyes. River Joe wasn't a big man, physically; his face was rugged but ordinarily kind. Now, though, Krunston fell back as if he had been hit in the face.

"I travel up and down the river with this barge," Joe said quietly. "I buy and sell secondhand stuff. My costs are low; and I have a big turnover. I make a good living out of this business and my records will prove it."

Krunston had backed up far enough to feel safe. "All right," he gritted. "If you want to play it that way, I'll see that the cops give you a going over." He turned and strode back toward the street.

Joe took Louise down the gangplank, through the maze of neatly arranged materials, to the deck house at the back of the barge. Joe wasn't worried about the police; as soon as he had Louise safely in the deck house he would go back and tell them what he knew. No more, probably, than a dozen witnesses had already told.

He opened the door. The little cabin was a cheery, colorful place. Louise's hand showed in the selection of curtains, drapes and decorations. The one jarring note was a door, leading to the engine room, that Joe had insisted on leaving painted red.

Louise put the model ship down on the table. The red door banged open and Toothy strode in. The two big

automatics in his hairy hands seemed to have grown there, they fitted so naturally.

One of them held on Louise. She had been crying, from sympathy for Pop's cruel and needless death, but in the face of danger her tears dried and her chin came up. Even in that situation River Joe felt a surge of admiration for her courage.

Then Toothy was growling in his hoarse voice: "So Pop set a trap for me, huh? Well, he'll never cross nobody else. That's what happens to guys what try to mix me up."

Toothy's reddish eyes were fastened on the Spanish galleon.

"Why did you come here?" Joe said as casually as he could. If he could only manage to keep Toothy talking, the police might come down here. "What do you want?"

"Want?" Toothy rumbled. "I want a get-away. I remembered you had a launch. You're going to take me, and the girl friend goes along so that you'll be good."

He shoved one automatic into a coat pocket. He held the other on Louise. "Hope you think enough of her not to make a bum move," he said to Joe, out of the side of his mouth.

Joe did. He was listening hopefully for the sound of feet on the gangplank. Toothy had the cunning of a weasel. He had sensed that River Joe might jump into a gun held on himself, but not when it was trained on Louise.

Toothy had walked forward to the table. He was still looking at the model.

"HELL!" he cried suddenly. "I knowed I'd seen that before. It's Pop's favorite model. He'd never let me touch it. What are you doing with it?"

"Pop gave it to us," Louise declared. "It was the last thing he did. Don't you dare touch it— Oh!"

This last, as Toothy, greed twisting

his features, ripped the sails and masts from the model with one big paw. Weeks, months, of Pop's careful, loving labor were destroyed in that one instant of vandalism.

"The old fool had jack at one time." The words bit out between the yellowed teeth. "Used to have a trading schooner, down on the South Seas. Maybe there's some kale in here."

He lifted the model, brought it down over the edge of the table. There was a splintering crack, a sharp cry of anguish from Louise, and the hull split in half. Toothy's blunt fingers explored the inside, then he slammed it to the floor with a curse.

Joe laughed loudly. He had heard heavy footsteps out on the gangplank. If he could only hold Toothy's attention a minute longer.

Then a gruff voice hailed from forward on the barge, "Joe! Where are you?"

Toothy crouched down. His other automatic whipped from his pocket. He had recognized the hailing voice as that of Ed Rowell, a hard-faced patrolman in the water-front precinct. His heavy steps jarred on the deck as he came closer.

Toothy motioned to Louise. "In the engine room, quick!" He followed her through the red door, closed it to a crack. "Get rid of the law, and make it snappy," his voice rasped back to Joe. "Remember, I've got your doll in here; so don't get cute."

The outer door burst open and Rowell strode in. He was a good enough pavement pounder. He didn't have all the brains in the world and he resented River Joe, simply because Joe had more abilities. And now Rowell was hopping mad because he had been bawled out, by his superiors, over Toothy's escape.

"What do you mean by running away?" he roared. "I tried to ask you some questions; then you beat it. Your



girl is the only one who talks to Pop before he dies, and you and her slip away with a model of his. What's the idea?"

Joe explained, with his eye on the crack at the side of the red door. He tried to wink at Rowell, tip him off with some signal with his hands or facial expression. But he had to be careful; anything obvious would be instantly spotted by the watching Toothy.

Rowell was too mad to notice Joe's attempts to telegraph warning. "So I brought Miss Archer down here to recover herself," Joe finished his story. "Then she went home."

He didn't want Rowell asking to see Louise. That would be fatal.

"She didn't!" Rowell grated. "Several people saw you come down here; nobody saw her leave. There's something fishy about this——"

TN—3

*"Pretend you're looking at this
Don't turn around, because——"*

He stopped as his eyes fell to the floor at the side of the table. "Ah!" He stooped quickly and came up with the pieces of the broken Spanish galleon.

"So!" He looked at Joe. "Your girl gets this from Pop. Maybe a message in it from Pop to Toothy, or some money for him. You tear it open to get it. Come clean; what was it?"

Joe's eyes flickered around the little cabin frantically. His gaze played over the shelves in one corner, where he kept the curios he picked up in his trading. Old pewter and silver tableware, antiquated, but valuable, types of dagger and guns.

But he couldn't keep his eyes from that red door. Everything was so deathly still behind it.

"I just dropped the model," he ex

plained, and moved toward the outside door. "Let's go up to the street and see——"

"Naw!" Rowell snorted. "I'm going to find out what's wrong here and right now." He pawed his service revolver out clumsily.

He looked slowly around the room, then started toward the red door.

"THAT'S far enough!" River Joe's voice had changed. The ring in his tones—and the pressure of something large and round in the small of the cop's back—brought him up short.

"This is an old horse pistol," Joe went on coldly. "It's about the bore of a young shotgun, and I hope I don't have to show you what size hole it would blow in your back."

Rowell stood absolutely still. "I was right," he gritted. "There is something wrong here."

"Turn around!" Joe cut him off. "Out that door, then straight down to the gangplank and keep going. I'll be watching you from the doorway here."

Rowell moved out deliberately. "I guess you know what this means," he said back over his shoulder. "Pulling a gun on an officer and——"

"Keep going," Joe commanded. He knew well enough that he would have a lot of explaining to do, if he and Louise ever got away from Toothy to do it. He watched Rowell stalk up the gangplank, then closed the door and dropped the horse pistol.

It hadn't been loaded, anyway.

"All right, Toothy"—he faced toward the red door—"I kept my part of the bargain. But Rowell will be back with a squad——"

There was no answer—not a sound from behind the red door. Sweat began to pop out in great beads on Joe's face, as he listened and could only hear the murmur of the river current against the sides of the barge.

Then he knew! Knew that it had been entirely too quiet in the engine room all the time he had been talking to Rowell.

He dashed to the red door, through the silent engine room to the back of the barge, where his small launch had been tied up. He knew even before he saw the empty place that it would be gone. It was.

Then from the gangplank came the tread of many feet and Rowell's outraged bellow: "Come out with your hands up, Joe! We're coming after you."

Joe darted back into the engine room. He had noticed something in his mad rush through it. There it was—a piece of brown wrapping paper weighted down with a wrench on the flywheel of the engine.

Toothy's scrawl read:

Things are getting too hot. I'm borrowing your boat and taking the skirt along for protection. Don't call the coppers, or she gets it.

Another hail rang out sharply from the forward end of the barge. The police would be closing in on him in a minute. Joe made it to the rail in a limping run. He dropped into the river and merged into the water as if he were a living part of it.

The change in River Joe, as he swam silently and swiftly out into the river, seemed nothing short of a miracle. On land, his back injury made him a little stiff, made his step halting. But in the water he surged ahead, as gracefully as an otter, without apparent effort.

It was simply that the fall off a pier, two years before, had injured his lower spine. The river gave him back his strength. It buoyed him up, relieved the weight of his upper body from the injured vertebra, and made him whole again.

He had need of all this strength, Joe realized grimly. Flashlight beams began to shoot out from his barge. Joe went under, just before one reached him. No trace of disturbance or bubble remained on the surface of the water to show that any living thing had been there. When he came up he was far toward the other bank.

Then he let the current take him downstream. He was taking a desperate chance. The side of the river opposite the city was lowland: islands and marshes, with a maze of sluggish, winding channels through them. There was the logical place for Toothy and his gang to hide out, and there was where Louise might be, even now.

There were houses there, scattered and isolated. Ideal hide-outs. Deserted fishing shacks, cabins of duck hunters—they might be holed up in dozens of safe places.

Two light buoys ahead marked the channel leading from the river into the marshes, and Joe swam toward them. This was his one and only chance. Louise would be killed and the robbers gone long before he could find their hide-out in the marshes.

But this channel was the only way in. Joe was praying, as he reached one buoy and rested his hand against its slick side, that he had come quickly enough to cut off Toothy and Louise. Toothy might have lost much time letting the launch drift away from the barge before he started the engine.

FIVE MINUTES PASSED. Ten. Joe was in agony. Had he made a foolish move, and sacrificed Louise's life? But if he had taken time to explain to the cops and they had searched the marsh country in police launches—he knew what would have happened to Louise.

He knew what would happen to her anyway. She would be killed, her body weighted and thrown in some slough,

as soon as Toothy figured her value as a hostage had passed. The only way to save her was to slip in—in time.

Three boats had passed. Joe, watching from behind the buoy, had seen that they were ordinary fishing parties. Then a boat, running without lights, swerved into the channel from the river.

Joe went under, swam toward it. He knew it wasn't his boat; he could only see a dim blur as he looked up from under the water. Then a flashlight shot ahead, for an instant, picking up the channel.

In that flash Joe saw the stoop-shouldered man, with the scar on his neck, at the wheel. The man who had been on Water Street when Pop was shot.

There were two men in the boat. It picked up speed with a churn of white water from the propeller. Joe swam desperately, came up just in front of the bow, and grasped its sharp, copper-stripped edge. His body was twisted and slammed tightly against the hull by the speed of the boat.

Joe hung on grimly, fighting for breath in the spray that rolled over his head. The speed increased; once away from the river the searchlight clicked on and lighted up the winding, rush-lined shores.

Something hit Joe's side and pain streaked through his whole body. He realized it was a piece of driftwood they had run over. His arms began to get numb, but he forced himself to hold his slipping grip on the bow. If his hands tore loose at that speed, he knew he would be swept under the boat and mangled by the whirling propeller.

How Joe managed to hang on for the next few minutes he never knew. Then the terrific strain on his arms lessened suddenly. Their speed slackened. The searchlight clicked out. The boat turned sharply into a narrow side channel and drifted up to a pier that showed dimly in the starlight.

Joe saw some oil drums on the pier, a small frame shack with lights behind cracked blinds; then they came up close to the float. Then Joe saw his own boat, tied under the end of the pier!

He had traced Louise, but he was stiffened and bruised and the odds were against him. He let go of the bow and let the side drift past as they came up to the float. Now was the time to start lessening the odds.

"Let's split and scam," a voice above Joe whispered hoarsely. "Toothy's too hot for us to be fooling around with."

"Right!" the other seconded, and reached out for the float.

He never touched it.

River Joe came up out of the water with a leap like a fighting swordfish. He caught one man's arm, the other's shoulder, and jerked them out and down. It was done so quickly that their yelps of terror were smothered on their lips by the water, as Joe forced them down.

They kicked and struck and clawed, but a steellike arm that wouldn't loosen was around each of their necks, keeping them down below the surface. Gradually, their struggles weakened. Joe forced himself to hold them under until they were nearly limp; then he brought them to the surface.

He listened. There seemed to be no alarm from the lighted house. Seconds were precious, though. They had heard the boat come in and would be investigating in a moment. Joe lifted the two weakly stirring forms into their boat, found an automatic on one that he appropriated. He tore off a handful of ignition wires from the engine and pushed the boat out into the sluggish current.

The shack looked like a one-room affair, as Joe slipped closer. It set just on the landward edge of the pier. Joe moved carefully to the door and glanced through the warped siding inside.

"But you said—— We agreed be-

forehand," Elton Krunston's voice said, "that I was to have a full quarter. You got over twenty thousand."

THE MANAGER of the Sunset Co. wasn't acting a bit cold or haughty now. He was facing Toothy across a pine-board table. The gasoline lamp on it showed the fear on Elton Krunston's face, with its white, glaring light.

"Maybe I did say that, then," Toothy mouthed coarsely. "But things is different now. Killings made things more expensive, see? The cashier, Pop, and now this dame will have to be shut up."

Joe had seen Louise on a chair against one wall. Black tape banded her wrists together and made a patch over her mouth, but her feet seemed to be free.

"You'll take just one grand and like it," Toothy went on. "I'm generous to give you that. Maybe later I'll call on you for that, or more, or tell that you was in on robbing your own outfit."

Krunston paled and his mouth fell open.

Toothy turned toward the door. "That boat; I thought I heard——"

He stopped very suddenly. River Joe, his wet clothing torn to shreds, blood mixing with the water that ran down his body, stood in the doorway.

The threat of the gun in Joe's hand snapped Krunston's overwrought nerves. "Kill Toothy!" he screeched. "Shoot him!"

He threw himself at Toothy in a flurry of desperation. Toothy jerked his automatics and fired, just as Krunston caught them.

The bullets tore into the manager, but he held on to the guns. Joe was running in, trying to get a shot at Toothy, past Krunston's writhing body. Krunston's flailing legs tripped Joe. He crashed into the table and the gasoline lantern crashed to the floor, flickered, and burst up into bright, spreading flame.

Krunston, dying, still held to Toothy's guns. Joe clubbed his gun, swung at Toothy's head. The killer let go his guns and hit and kicked at Joe in the same movement.

They clinched and rolled over on the floor, through the edges of the burning gasoline. Joe saw Louise leap up, try to pick up an ax with her bound hands. Then Toothy brought his knee up into Joe's stomach, sickingly.

Joe was weakening fast, under Toothy's savage blows. He suddenly abandoned all attempts to fight Toothy, even to protect himself. He caught Toothy and rolled over and over, out the door. Too late, Toothy realized what was happening. He struggled savagely, a hoarse yell of terror rang from his throat as they toppled off the pier. It choked off as they hit the water.

Louise, trying vainly to help, had followed them out on the pier. She looked down. Only bubbles and churning, muddy water, told what was happening below the dark surface of the water. She held the ax between her knees, sawed her taped wrists frantically across the cutting edge. Her hands came free. She was just poised on the edge of the pier, ready to jump in, when Joe's head broke the surface. He swam wearily to shore, dragging the burly, limp figure of Toothy behind him.

POLICE LAUNCHES, speeding in to the fire that threw a reddish glow over the marshland, had picked up the two robbers still unconscious and drifting in their boat. The pay-roll money was safe. Louise had recovered it from the burning shack.

It was hours later before they got back to the barge. Joe looked like a mummy; he was so swathed in bandages. Louise was fussing over him tenderly. Joe picked up the broken pieces of the Spanish galleon in stiff fingers.

Something rattled inside one of the pieces. River Joe studied the keel carefully. It was too wide toward the bow—a man *who knew ships would notice that*.

And Joe knew ships; Pop knew that he did, and had given them the Spanish galleon.

Joe's fingers felt along the keel, found an indentation where his thumb nail seemed to fit naturally, and pushed. A tiny panel, no wider than a nail file, slid out, disclosing a hollow place.

Joe took one glance and breathed deeply. Then he said to Louise: "Hold out both hands, cupped together, and close your eyes. It is a treasure ship."

It was. A cascade of white fire—glistening pearls that shimmered in the light—fell into Louise's outstretched hands.



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SAVAGE QUEST

"Red heads wanted, eh?"

by Bassett Morgan

THE LONG cool drink placed at Tom Mansey's elbow on a desk of the Company's office did not wholly soothe his irritation at being selected for another gruelling and perilous trip along the sinister North coast of New Guinea.

"You know the locale better than anyone," they said.

"My hard luck," he replied. "What's wrong now?"

Old Professor Bertrand, up there writing treatises about the native methods of drying human heads, and worst of all having his daughter with him. He has, misguidedly, paid for his specimens and done more harm than he realizes. He has, probably, as fine a collection of human heads as ever was gathered, and he has sent word in that one brought to him had yellow hair!"

"Steve Okey!" cried Mansey. His tilted chair crashed its front legs sharply on the office floor.

"That is what we thought. Lying on his own schooner, off one of those native villages, Steve Okey's yellow head tempted some bold native buck to win a bride by taking a head, and possibly get himself a lot of trade gimcracks by disposing of it to Professor Bertrand. The old boy's heart will be broken at being jerked out of there because he obligingly reported his possession of a yellow head. But it will be a good thing for his daughter if she is taken where women belong. And, Mansey, if I were you, I would not be wearing red hair up there this spring."

"Red heads wanted, eh?" he cried

jumping to his feet. "By that same bloody token, if they killed Steve Okey, just to hang his cranium over the curing smoke, I'll learn the by and large of it. I'll let them take a look at mine and go wanting it for trade purposes. By the nine-tail father o' missing links —" he spouted his crisp sea-oaths until his newly risen indignation cooled enough to obtain further information about his destination.

"The professor meticulously describes the lip-sewing and fancy touches of trader's blue beads in the eyes and locates the particular tribe by those details, Mansey. It fits in. Okey was up that way, according to his crew, when they found his body on deck with the head missing. He'd been drunk, poor devil. . . ."

Leaving the Company office, Mansey's horror at the fate of Steve Okey increased and his wrath mounted. Running his fingers through his own mop of fiery-red hair he stood it on end as a gesture of defiance. Until Okey was avenged, the barbers would not see him. With the map prepared by the office drones folded in his pocket he went to his smart schooner, roused his crew and weighed anchor. The corrugated iron roofs of Port Moresbay, roasting among the trees, fell behind. He was started on the trail of natives who could take cover in rivers and jungles as effectively as fleas hide in the hair of a hound. Only incidentally, in his wrath, did the task of expostulating with the scientist, Professor Bertrand, count in his mission.



The paint-streaked savages were rushing forward, yowling like fiends, scattering the astounded villagers.

NORTH AND WEST along the flank of Papua he forged, where dawns pour radiance on a fire-tipped sea, where sunsets smoulder in dusky crimson deepening to umber around the black hills, where dark rivers stain the sea beyond their deltas with murky water and emit a stench like a tiger's throat.

Dank, heavy emanations of Papua's swamp-decay came on the wind, but in a life of exploring its amazing secrets the lure of the sinister island, treacherous as a panther crouching on the seas, was in his blood.

Professor Bertrand had chosen a

pleasing spot for his investigations into the ingenious hellery of unchastised natives' fancy-work. A white moon shone on the gleaming sea when Mansey's craft anchored off the locality marked with a red X on his map. Coral reefs reached white arms. Fires twinkled between peaked huts wading the lagoon on stilt legs. The natives were dancing to the irritating rumble of tomtoms that purred and throbbed and growled about wild adventures, with life as the forfeit.

He waited until morning when the dancers slept and only women were abroad, to go ashore in a small boat.

The women stared at his hair and beard, and offered him trade; a few Paradise skins, and small pearls. But they invited him to have turtle-stew, coconut cream and a gourd of kava-kava. And while he was refusing food and drink, and informing them their skins and pearls were poor, a few bucks emerged from the great *lagi-lagi* house where they slept.

The drums had been silent for a few hours. But one began speaking, chattering its code talk which Mansey could interpret: "A head of heads! Hair like fire on its dome and face!"

Shaking his own head like a lion to the sun to torment their greedy souls, he strode through the village with young men dogging his footsteps. In feather bags around their necks these carried the feather-crest that may be worn only after a youth has taken a head, entitling him to the rites of manhood, and wives.

The speaking drum blubbered about a desire that was not for kava, or women, noisily combatting his search for a savage who had carried away the head of Steve Okey so that he might teach the tribe what befalls a native who slaughters a man for his head. Mansey hoped those gluttons for trade gramaphones and cheap jewelry might betray the culprit whom they must have envied as he sat somewhere contentedly filling a boned skin with hot shore sand, turning it gently so that it would dry perfectly. But Mansey was disappointed and returned to his vessel headed for another simple village alongshore.

The weather had been so flawless that the little Tonga boys of his crew wore their fancy hats and baggy trousers, having little to do. But on that night he noticed that they had stripped to G-strings and squatted together, talking little, staring at the deck a good deal and meditating on God alone knew what.

They were a fairly meek crowd, loyal

enough and more dreamy than the lively Dyaks, but they were more sensitive and he thought they seemed disturbed by things which he could neither see, hear nor feel.

Presently, Mansey found he was being followed by a flock of oiled black canoes with swan-beaked high prows, flying silently on his trail—or pursuing the beacon of his red head!

"So I'm leading them like a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, am I?" he shouted. "Gulu, how long time you catchem smell out him black fella long time he come topside?" he asked his best Tonga-man.

Gulu could not correctly estimate the time to elapse before the pursuing savages became bold enough to make trouble. But decidedly he smelled death coming nearer. It was very bad shore country and his liver was white with fear.

Gula and the others diligently honed their waved krises. Greater than the mission-taught fear of the Lord was the fear of their fellowmen which had the crew by the throats. But the moon sank and dawn came, and Mansey went ashore to the village marked X, to call on Professor Bertrand.

SHELLS FRINGING the lagoon huts tinkled in the wind. There were neat gardens, a house more pretentious than the others where a white girl sat in the doorway above the shining green water, brushing and braiding her long ropes of blond hair. Mansey, who had visualized an elderly spinster daughter of the old scientist, gaped at her and gasped, and some of his high courage slumped.

She leaped up at sight of his vessel, waved her arm, and began calling to her father. She came out in a canoe, paddled expertly to meet him, half-crazed with joy at having a visitor. In five minutes he knew her life-history, companion to her father, educated by him. Man-

sey would have added, selfishly martyred by him also.

"In three years, Captain Mansey, I haven't talked to a visitor. But in six months father will have finished and we shall go outside—to Sydney, perhaps—somewhere."

"You poor kid," he sympathized.

"My dresses are worn out long ago, so I wear this." Her pretty hands smoothed the folds of brightly printed cotton wrapping her body tightly, a pareu. Bulging the folds that bound it in place, with ends tucked in, was a small pearl-handed revolver, by which Mansey knew she understood the perils of the place. Her gallant courage clutched at his innate chivalry.

Professor Bertrand was much older than his years, practically bald, wholly absorbed in his investigations and not even curious about world happenings. His natives put on a show for Mansey, with lusty dancing and songs that the professor said were so old their meanings were lost.

"Old as the progenitors of crocodiles among the mangrove roots of the river," he cried sonorously as though orating, "old as the beginning of fire——"

"And drying of human heads," added Mansey.

"Yes. Are you interested in those?" Bertrand cried.

"I came purposely to see you and them," said Mansey.

The professor's collection of heads was unique and so was the utter placidity of his conscience concerning them. The last one which Mansey handled was little larger than his fist, but it had been a noble Viking dome, and the thick blond hair was beautifully plaited to form a spiked crown around the shrunken features. The blue beads in the eye-sockets affected Mansey deeply.

"I knew him when——" he began and choked a little. "I'm after the savage that bumped him off——"

"But, my dear fellow, you may prevent them fetching more specimens," cried the professor in alarm.

"I aim to stop it as a profitable sport," said Mansey. "And I was sent to request you and Miss Bertrand to accompany me outside to a port more comfortable for her at least."

"Thank you for a kind intention, but it is impossible for me to leave just yet, Captain Mansey——"

"I'm sorry," said Mansey sternly, "but it is orders, professor. I hope you will not object, but——"

"You mean that you are commanding me——" The professor's wrath mounted as understanding sank in. He sputtered protestations until his lips turned blue, and he slumped in a fainting fit such as his daughter had described. Mansey strongly suspected it was a heart attack and applied restoratives.

"Miss Bertrand, you can see it is best for him to return to civilization and a doctor. If I leave you both for perhaps a day, could you persuade him to pack up and be ready to come with me?" he asked the girl.

"I'll try," she promised. "I'll do my best."

"I know you will. I have a little business up the coast and cannot say how many hours it will take. And I had better be gone when he comes to—no use aggravating him."

"I'll take you to the schooner," she said. "I know these spells of his. Anger always brings one. The natives think he is communing with the gods in them."

SHE STEADIED her canoe into which Mansey descended by the notched log of the hut, a badly worried man.

"Miss Bertrand, can you tell me from whom your father got the blond head?" he asked her earnestly as her paddle cut into the silvered ripples.

"Why, yes, it came from the tribe of

Taumla, up the shore where you are going. I don't know which of the men cured it, but by the use of beads for eyes, it may have been one of the tribe who has had some dealings outside. But it isn't the best time to visit Taumla's people because they are having blood-rites."

"I've seen them in other tribes," he said. "And I don't want to delay our return longer than I must."

"You know best, of course," she agreed. "But do shave and cut your hair before they see you, Captain Mansey—"

He laughed. "You don't like Samsons, eh?"

"You know it isn't that. But heads like yours are worth gramophones and alarm clocks, winding toys and goodness knows what besides."

"And hereabouts, fools and their heads are soon parted, you might add, Miss Bertrand."

"Nobody but natives call me 'Mees,'" she said wistfully. "My name is Edna."

"Then, Edna, the next time I see you, we shall be returning to places where you can dance and have parties and go to theaters."

"I can hardly believe it will come true!" she said. "Thank you, Captain Mansey, for coming for us."

Mansey, leaning on the schooner's rail, watched her canoe shoot darkly over the crinkling splendor of the sea. He hated leaving her there even briefly.

But by dawn his vessel approached the strip of shore ruled by old Taumla, a chieftain long friendly with white interlopers from whom he had garnered pigeon lingo and ideas in trading. Mansey had talked with him before and he went ashore boldly.

As Bertrand's daughter had warned him, one of the seasonal tribal rites was in progress. Lanky youths were having their bodies scarred in geometric designs, slashed with a sharpened shell and poisoned so they would cicatrize.

Drums drowned out their yelling under torture. Warriors had been celebrating and the *lagi-lagi* house was filled with men sleeping off debauches.

Old Taumla was red-eyed and noisy in his greeting to Mansey. His son, who had spent much time among white men, was now a warrior wearing his crest of Paradise plumes, and was taking a wife that day. Mansey, said the old chief, must stay for the feast.

Then a wedding gift was due, Mansey replied, and he would go to his schooner and fetch it. But he strolled through the village on the way to the lagoon, and he saw that there had been a clearing out of human war trophies that are treasured and handed down from father to son, to grow old and green moulded. They were gone and only grotesque dance masks and shields remained, and these were ancient and frail with age. The fine new war shields were not displayed on the racks, which meant trouble, Mansey thought.

His Tonga boys waiting in the small boat were nervous as caged cats. On the schooner Mansey went to his cabin and took out his razors. A little later he viewed in the mirror his shaved chin, pale beneath the sun-tan of his cheeks, and his cropped pate. Even the pith helmet did not conceal the loss of the red mop of hair that formerly hid his generous-sized ears.

Gulu stared when he came on deck and pointed to the lagoon. In the river mouth canoes were gathered. Little drums purred like tigers. Gorgeously decorated young warriors were chanting.

MANSEY ORDERED a case of trade gimcracks brought up and put in the boat, then he spoke to Gulu. He was going ashore for a little while. In case he had not returned before moonrise, Gulu was to run the schooner to Bertrand's lagoon, and take the old white man and his daughter to Port Moresbay.

"You come back," Gulu assured him. "Marster heap no good same white-belly fish."

"Hm-m-m," commented Mansey, his thoughts flashing irrelevantly to Edna Bertrand and the glory of her yellow hair.

A yell startled him. The war canoes were speeding from the river mouth, coming alongside. In the largest sat old Taumla, and standing in the prow was a young man wearing the finest crest of feathers Mansey had ever seen, with a gun belt around his middle. Mansey realized he was the chief's semi-civilized son, possessed of that "little knowledge"

that is dangerous. The young man's body decorations were newly healed, showing that he had won his tribal honors fairly recently. He spoke "pigeon" with fluency and invited Mansey to ride ashore in the big canoe.

Mansey looked at the black band of canoes closing the reef entrance and decided to humor the savages. The box of trinkets was transferred to the canoe, and he carried another box containing Parlor Magic, Bengal Lights, some pinwheels and sky-rockets, and small sticks of dynamite disguised as Roman Candles.

Old Chief Taumla was staring at him



The professor's collection of heads was unique, as was his utter placidity concerning them.

so earnestly his blood-shot eyes fairly bulged. He began growling guttural information to his son which Mansey guessed concerned the ruin of his ruddy hirsute adornments. He spat contemptuously as the canoe shot shoreward.

Old women were attending the cooking pots. Children played in the shallow water. From a bleaching hut a girl looked out; her head was like a curly feather duster, her skin was the hue of old ivory. The son of Taumla yelled at her and the old woman jerked her out of sight again as he informed Mansey that she was to be his bride.

The feasting began early with stews and many gourds of kava and lasted through the day, the participants growing steadily noisier. Mansey was waiting for the kava to start the chief and his son to boasting of their own prowess, and the old witch-doctors to chanting their praises. In the early falling darkness he set off the sky-rockets and pinwheels, and burned the colored lights which weirdly illumined the jungle.

All day the drums had been purring and thudding. They roared a quicker combination as the dancing of warriors began around the big central fire near shore. Sitting near old Taumla, Mansey spoke of his stalwart son and tried to learn how he had won his bride, and finally brazenly asked to see the head he had taken.

On his last visit, Mansey said, there had been many heads hanging on the skull racks; now they were gone.

Taumla glowered at him drunkenly, sullenly. Suddenly he snatched off Mansey's helmet and dashed it down. He yelled his disgust at Mansey's close-cropped head. His booming cry penetrated the noise of drums, halted the prancing warriors. Mansey jumped to his feet aware that doom was upon him. He glanced at the lagoon and felt his heart miss a beat. On the flood tide the schooner was speeding beyond the

reef jaws. A rush of warriors reached the canoes and like arrows they shot across the shining bay in pursuit.

TRAPPED AMONG the kava-crazed savages, Mansey whirled to flee into the thickets where his gun would be of use. But he saw old Taumla swing his scepter of rank, a wooden club spiked with shark's teeth. Mansey dodged as the deadly missile flew and crashed into the coral. Then he plunged face down, tripped by the skinny arms of an old man, and in another instant the black mob were swarming over him, yelling like fiends.

It was the son of Taumla who decided his fate for that night. In hilarious mood he informed Tom Mansey that it was no use killing him in his present condition. It was the act of a fool to sacrifice his fine hair and beard, but it would grow again, and there was no hurry about killing him.

Mansey began to breathe easier at the promised respite. When the kava courage died out, Taumla's son might remember the ways of the white man in punishing natives who killed one of them. He futilely cursed Gulu for deserting the lagoon so early in the night. They had bound him securely and he sat against the young tree to which he was tied, hearing Taumla's son harangue the warriors who yelled approval.

After endless demonstrations the marriage went forward in a hell of drunken noise and old Taumla, almost helpless with kava, fell near Mansey and muttered laboriously in his scant command of lingo, disclosures that crashed down on his courage.

It was true the time-honored heads were gone from the village, he gave Mansey to understand, but they were mostly old, and the young men would take fresh heads. His son was a bold warrior. The hut of his wife would soon display a head of heads, with long hair the color of sunrise, hair the color

of the small flames that leap from the heart of a cooking fire into outer darkness. To-morrow, Taumla said, his son would take this head. Perhaps Mansey would like to see how it was done, and how his own head would be cured when again it sprouted a fine crop of hair.

It was difficult to feign indifference to the tormenting of drunken, savage old Taumla. His meaning was all too plain. The hair, colored like sunrise, could only mean Edna Bertrand.

Professor Bertrand had a great deal to answer for. Having purchased the war trophies of Taumla's village, the savages knew he could furnish evidence to the white overlords which would bring down swift punitive measures. They had never meant to let him go outside to tell what he knew. The coming of Mansey with his schooner had precipitated an end long planned.

All night went on the fitful dances and war-chants, until darkness fled and the Birds of Paradise were dancing on the treetops, and parrots flipped in flashes of vivid colors through the lower brush. Weary celebrants splashed in the lagoon and went to the canoes, snatching up the emptied gourds to drain the last drops of depleted kava, dashing them down in disappointment.

Taumla's son, humanly in high feather after his wedding, displayed to Mansey evidences of the refinements of contact with white persons, for he ordered food brought and his bonds untied.

"Heap drunk," he said apologetically about the attack on Mansey. The young man did not know about old Taumla's drunken disclosures before he was dragged off to his hut by his wives. To-day, the young warrior stated, they would go in the canoes up the salt river to visit another village, while Mansey's vessel was away, the village of the Old Smooth-headed white man. Perhaps Mansey had seen its fine gardens.

With his nerves quivering, Mansey

made suitable replies, reminding Taumla's son of the indignities heaped upon him in the night and demanding to travel befitting his rôle of friendly visitor to the tribe, and have restored his box of magic.

Swaggering with ill-concealed triumph at granting the request of a white tuan utterly in his power and seemingly gullible, the young man brought the case of tricks, after pawing them over to see if the box contained weapons.

His people, stated the savage, were fools and it would not be safe for Tuan Mansey to stay in the village while the warriors were away. He himself, the chief's son, would look after the comforts of the white tuan as long as he stayed among them. Which would be until his hair and beard were luxuriant again, Mansey thought to himself grimly.

He could thank his red hair for making him precious to the murderous youngster who would guard him jealously against all comers.

LYING ON MATS in the big canoe, through the war-chants and drums, Mansey racked his brain to plan his own escape and the rescue of Bertrand and his daughter, a large order for a man without arms, the captive of these bold killers.

Mangroves darkened the sluggish river stretches and in the canoe prow a torch cast ruddy gleams on the black water. From the twisted tree roots crocodiles slid and watched with beady eyes the passing of the flotilla. For hours it threaded an inland waterway until Mansey caught the salt tang of sea wind. They had avoided the long coast route and had come to Bertrand's village from the rear. The canoes rested while scouts ran ahead to reconnoitre. The distant purring of solemn drumming throbbed on the wind. Mansey closed his eyes, hoping to get needed rest.

He was not the only exhausted member of the crowd. Taumla's son and others were wakened by the returning scouts who brought news which the young leader pondered before translating to Mansey. He heard that Old Smooth-head was dead. The tribe were holding a funeral as for a tribal witch-doctor. His girl was very sad. Maybe Tuan Mansey would like to fetch her to Taumla's village since it was not safe for a white Mary to live alone with the natives.

Highly suspicious of the information, Mansey could only agree without seeming enthusiastic, concealing his eagerness. With him went Taumla's son and a dozen young bucks bristling with armament, spears, knives, hatchets, painted with cinnabar and other pigments in stripes and dots, as hideously gorgeous a band of murderers as ever rived the gaudy parrots.

From the jungle edge they looked down on the shore village which was lighted by fires, and Mansey saw why they had not attacked. Outside the reef lay his schooner.

The aftermath of a tribal burial engaged Bertrand's village. The elderly professor was swinging in his high bier of upright poles, a burial custom that in life had greatly intrigued him. His fine large hut on the lagoon showed a lighted doorway and some one inside moving about; beyond doubt it was his daughter. The kava confidences of Taumla flashed to Mansey's mind, sickeningly. Fervently, he thanked fate that the son had no inkling of the old man's garrulous disclosures.

"You are painted for war," he told the young man. "If these people see your warriors they will fight and the white Mary may be hurt. Let me go and make magic for the village and speak to her. Let one man come to carry the magic box—yourself."

The son of Taumla did not carry boxes like a servant, but he ordered one

man to take it and lead the way down with Mansey between them. Silently the war canoes paddled on to lie concealed in the river mouth ready to shoot forth. In the darkness Mansey's fingers were feeling in the litter of his box of magic, finding the terrible little missiles disguised as pretty Roman candles though heavier, and quickly he was biting the percussion caps and sliding them in his pockets, thinking it were better Edna Bertrand died that night than live to visit Taumla's village.

They let him walk alone along the coral, with Taumla's son and the other buck stalking him between the concealing trees and the other warriors beyond them clutching their spears. The hand of Taumla's son clutched a revolver. Mansey's belt and gun were around his waist. There wasn't a chance for life, Mansey thought, only an opportunity to save Edna Bertrand from worse than death. His schooner, lying supine on the star-lighted sea, was a menace. The silently gliding canoes would swoop on her, his crew would be butchered, and the natives would loot and sink the vessel. He knew perfectly their unspoken deadly scheme.

The village was unpleasantly startled at his yelled greeting, which interrupted their dance. The cessation of drumming brought Edna Bertrand to the door of her hut. Mansey called to her across the water and she threw up an arm. There was sobbing joy in her cry: "Captain Mansey, I'm so glad you're here—I'll come in——"

THE TALONS of fear raked his flesh as he watched her in the canoe, firelight shining on her hair and face. He waded in to catch the boat and saw Taumla's war canoes darkly stretched along the lagoon shores, and at that moment a villager discerned them. A wild yell of warning shrilled into the night. Offering her two hands to Mansey, Edna Bertrand stood frozen, frightened.

From the darkness paint-streaked savages were rushing down, yowling like fiends, scattering the astounded villagers.

Mansey shoved out the canoe, sending Edna Bertrand to her knees in it. He leaped on the prow and swung his arm, hurling a paper decorated section of sudden death at the fire. He dived toward the girl balancing the canoe from her place amidships and felt her hands clutch, heard her high scream as an explosion crashed and the fire of half-burned logs blew up and scattered blazing embers that streamed flame.

The detonations still rumbled among the trees, echoed from the tree tunnel above the river mouth, when Bertrand's daughter seized the paddle and still hampered by Mansey's twisting effort to up-end himself in the precariously balanced canoe, she dug deep into the water and sent the speeding craft seaward.

Papua had not cowed Edna Bertrand. Her father's death, her natural grief, her loneliness among savages during the funeral orgies had not daunted her. Even now, with the war canoes flying like a black scimitar from shore, she paddled smoothly while Mansey stood and hurled his second missile.

Black messengers of doom were speeding from the canoes, spears falling and darkly streaking the lagoon

water. Mansey snatched the paddle and stabbed with it, and the craft leaped, though not fast enough to win that race against death.

They were bounding over choppy waves at the reef mouth with poisoned darts and spears coming thicker, when from the schooner broke a pretty ball of smoke, followed by a low *bo-oom*. The thud of the shot brought a cry from the girl and an instant later the canoe capsized. Mansey came up reaching for her, but he saw the glory that was her crown and peril forging out, her arms flashing, and he kept abreast.

On shore battle had broken out. Huts were burning and the bamboo popped like a fusillade of giant crackers. On the lagoon there was a gap disfiguring the perfect symmetry of black teeth of death made by the splendid array of war canoes, and the blaze from burning huts shone on floating bodies and seawet feather coronets of dead warriors.

And from his schooner came another ball of smoke and thud of a shot, and a boat was coming toward the riot which he and Edna Bertrand made in the water. He saw her swimming furiously, with phosphorescence streaming in white fire and he knew it was the end of jeopardy, the beginning of another siege. Like the savage son of Taumla, he meant to possess her bright head to adorn his own house of life.

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Flight to Perno

by Thomas Calvert McClary

Perno is a volcanic isle one mile in diameter, lying solitary 128 statute miles E by N of Barbados. The island is subject to a peculiar fever, usually fatal within 6 hours of reaching its peak.

Tropical Mariner's Handbook

THE EQUATORIAL Guiana sun blasted through dead airs and its noontime veil. It picked heat bubbles in the dust of Morawina Airport and brought white blisters to the dark, set faces of four men standing on the apron.

Steve Cadigan said gruffly, "I've sailed and flown the islands all my life; I've rubbed noses with water spouts and stripped keels beneath my feet; I've boiled in the centers of hurricanes and felt the gales clean the covering off my fuselage. There are things you can't do, but I've done 'em."

"Perno," said "Cuba" Connors with a peculiarly flat voice, "is a pinhead plopped in the middle of the Atlantic. Good sea navigators often miss it in clear weather."

"I'll make it," Cadigan said. Sun-bleached blue eyes set in his mahogany-leathered face watched Buckler, crack Caribbean mechanic, give finishing tunes to the Lockheed Sirius.

"The girl's fever won't reach peak until dawn," Paterson said with a crack in his voice. "Why not radio Barbados to send the medicine?"

Cadigan gave the men a cool glance, and their eyes fell. "No big ship can get near Perno, and no small one would try without a west wind. The beach is too narrow to land a plane, and there's no harbor for a flying boat."

His eyes took on a distant, soft light. "I made a promise once and she's remembered. So have I."

Perno lies in the hurricane path. During fair weather it is swept by trade winds, but south of the island the winds are variable and currents irregular. True bearings from the southward are nearly impossible.

Tropical Mariner's Handbook

Cuba lighted a cigarette, and his muscular, scarred hands trembled. "It's five hundred and twelve miles from here to Perno with a frozen rudder. All over water. There are just three dry spots you might manage to crash on. They are thirty to eighty miles off course. Perno sunset is in exactly seven hours."

Winters, chief meteorologist of the hurricane cradle, said, "Even if your course is true and you sight Perno, there'll be trouble. You'll have to crash land. The island will be senidarkened by clouds. The winds will be whipping high. If you overshoot the beach, or get a cross ground wind with an empty tank, you'll land with the fishes."

A muscle tightened along Cadigan's jaw. He said nothing. "The fishes" were barracuda, the vicious, bloodthirsty murderers of tropical seas. The waters around Perno wriggled with them.

Paterson, of the oil company, wiped streaming sweat from a brow that was oddly chilled. He said, "You carry just enough fuel for six hundred miles at top efficiency. You're flying with no horizon. There's not a bearing point for Perno nearer than Barbados, and Perno lies damned near awash."



Very calmly, he sat the ship down on the wild waters of that terrible blackness.

"The island smells of spice to the leeward," Cadigan said.

"A thirteen-mile head wind or an eighty-mile total drift will land you in the coral shallows of Fernando Cays," Cuba announced. "That's the same as a million miles from Perno. The currents race east and west."

Winters jabbed a forefinger at a weather report. "You've got a two-hour safety margin, even if you get the breaks. You won't get them, Steve. Every ship in the islands is beating for port. How do you expect to make Perno by air?"

"It will be a bumpy flight," Cadigan said with tight lips.

"Flight, hell!" snapped Winters. "A two-point error in your bearings and you'll never see Perno! In four hours your compass will be jumping like a top."

Hurricanes in the lower latitudes may be preceded by compass disturbance. AL-

TN—4

though their general course may be charted, their exact actions, rate of growth and progressive velocity are unpredictable.

Tropical Mariner's Handbook

Winters looked glum and studied his chart. "Perno," he said jerkily, "is on the 59th meridian. The hurricane is now crossing the 53rd, with a three-hundred-mile radius from core to front. It is traveling twelve miles per hour."

Cadigan smiled coolly. "If the rate of progress and present front of the hurricane hold, I will be over Perno with about thirty miles to spare."

"If the rate of progress and present front holds!" Winters exploded. His voice went hysterically high and cracked. "Oh, hell!"

"Screw" Buckler turned away from the idling Lockheed and wiped dripping sweat from his grease-coated face. "She's tuned," he said briefly.

"How fast can I pump her?" Cadigan asked.

"Ninety flat for the first half of your fuel, ninety-five after. If you get a tail wind, keep the gun there. If you get a head wind——"

"Well?" demanded Cadigan.

"Well, Heaven help you, Steve! She'll do up to one fifty if you don't buck her too much. But she'll eat fuel. Every five miles of speed you put on above ninety-five takes one extra mile out of your tank."

"And if I buck her through heavy winds?"

Screw licked his lips. "A ship broke up in a hurricane here once. It was fourteen miles back from the coast. We found her motor nine miles back. We never found anything else."

Steve felt the precious waterproofed package belted around his waist. He slung on his parachute with a hard laugh. He extended a hand and grinned like a corpse.

Paterson handed him a flash of cognac, and Steve climbed into the open cockpit.

Screw darted into the hangar and lugged out two five-gallon cans of fuel and a small anchor. "Extra weight, but you may need 'em."

CADIGAN smiled grimly, pulled on his helmet and took off into the golden pink of the northward.

The long, rolling, white combers gave way to the light-green of shoal water beneath. The green turned darker. Suddenly the ocean was deep green and a continent slid over the horizon behind. The air was listless and warm.

Cadigan found altitude and hummed over specks of ships and vessels beating across the blue toward port. Steamers blasted siren warnings.

From time to time he dipped his plane over the deeps, blotched here and there with darker or lighter shades, where the depth varied greatly. Twice he found

altitude zero and skimmed his wheels through a hundred yards of ocean. A risky trick, but an old one to Caribbean bird men, telling them of the sea's mood. Each time the sea proved smooth and flat and brassy, not even swelling in its lethargic slumber.

Two hundred miles without a stir of wind, Cadigan noted. He took position with a false horizon and marked his position on a map. In exactly eighteen miles he should sight a peculiarly shaped, light-green blotch in the ocean, four miles to eastward. He checked altitude and set a swivel binocular sight to bear on the ocean at four miles. In twelve minutes he put his eye to the sight. In the center of the hair-thin sight cross he found the blotch, the long neck reaching north by east and then curling and bulging like an Italian squash.

There was a haze over the sun. The steady hum of the motor, the cloudless sky and the warm airs produced a heavy feeling. Danger, and the world, seemed very far away. Cadigan was lost in thought of the girl on Perno. He increased speed to ninety-five at two hundred and ninety-three miles almost automatically.

A changing hum from the prop brought him suddenly stiff and alert. He glanced over the side, then strained his ear to the engine. It hummed with smooth precision, but the tone was a bare note sharper. He glanced at the horizon a second time, and his eyes shot to the barometer.

At the approach of a hurricane a slight rise of barometer is noted and the atmosphere becomes exceedingly clear.

Tropical Mariner's Handbook

The barometer showed a rise of two tenths. The haze had vanished from the sun and ocean. The sky was cloudless, but no longer soft. It was bluer, a deep, cold, distant blue.

Cadigan took bearings again and

combed the horizon for a single rock, a coral reef growing atop a submarine mountain. He found it and scowled. His course was a fraction off. He tuned in the weather reports and his jaw squared sharper. One-hundred-and-ten-mile winds were reported to the north-eastward. That was high velocity for a horizontal wind storm. It meant the progress of the hurricane would speed up the same as a top set off along a parabolic course at greater speed than usual.

Cadigan took a pull of cognac and dropped low over the ocean. This time he did not skip his ship, but leveled off above the brassy blue and studied the oily liquid reflection. It crossed his mind that ship navigators had an easy time of it. It was not easy to study the sea's mood at ninety-five m.p.h.

FOR A MOMENT his eye could detect no difference on the surface. Something flashed in the sun a half mile away and he banked to cross over a floating tin can. A sudden change in its tinny flash told him what he wanted to know. A slow swell was setting in.

Cadigan reached for altitude, checked course and bearings and equipment. The crystal clearness of the atmosphere was fading. Bit by bit, the barometer dropped. The sky became covered with a delicate veil, becoming gradually denser toward the northeastward. Cadigan looked over the side. Whether his eyes noticed movements and shades land bird men seldom saw, or whether years of life among the island had given him a feeling for the island's moods, he did not know. But he knew the swell was not local. The sea was breathing with long, powerful breaths.

The note of the propeller changed gradually and grew deeper. The hum echoed back faintly from a growing invisible wall around Cadigan's immediate world. The reverberation was thick and sloppy. The atmosphere grew hot.

Cadigan tuned in his radio and had difficulty picking up a clear station. He smiled faintly as he picked out station after station. There were no radio beams in this part of the world, but there were other tricks. You could pretty well locate atmospheric disturbance by the way variously located stations came through. He found heavy static and dead spots on stations broadcasting far to the east and northward. An S O S flashed out of the northeast.

His ship bumped for the first time and teetered. Cadigan's eyes sought out the northeast horizon keenly. There was a second light bump, and he studied the blotches in the sea beneath with a set jaw. Some of those splotches he recognized, and they were not the ones he wanted to see. He was three points off course. A third bump lurched the ship. A gust of wind sang through the struts and was gone.

Hot, moist, oppressive weather makes itself felt on the outskirts of an approaching hurricane. Light and variable winds set in, both horizontal and vertical. The barometric pressures increase. A long ocean swell sets in from the direction of the storm center and feathery, cirrus clouds of the cat-tail variety stream out. There are several points' difference between the direction of the cirrus clouds and swell, the clouds only then forming to join the storm area, while the swell comes from the direction where the storm has recently passed.

Tropical Mariner's Handbook

"Coming into it," Cadigan thought grimly. Far to the eastward he saw the beautiful cat-tail clouds. They looked light and lazy, not dangerous.

For several minutes Cadigan studied the direction of the clouds. His eyes dropped to the ocean beneath. It had picked up into a heavy, well-defined swell now. He gave a grunt and took another pull of cognac. He knew, roughly, where the storm was. With luck he would outstrip it. He poured the extra fuel into a cockpit intake line

and screwed the caps of the cans back on carefully. Then he dented the cans so that their middles were slightly crushed in.

In a kit he found a coil of wire-cored rope. He made loops tight around the crushed centers of the cans. Then he fashioned a small harness like water wings. It crossed his mind that the idea of water wings in a hurricane should strike him funny. But it didn't.

"Four hundred and forty miles," Cadigan noted. The atmosphere was charging with potent wildness. He took bearings on the sun and moon and checked three positions on his chart. The plane might be in any of those three places. The winds were becoming steadier and stronger. His drift must be considerable.

AT four hundred and sixty miles the sky turned coppery toward the storm. The cat-tail clouds vanished. The barometer dropped rapidly and a dark-brown band gathered over the horizon to the right, then dropped solidly upon the ocean. Dark, racing masses of clouds came in sight. There was a peculiar, distant hum.

Cadigan took all the ceiling he could get. The spiral indraught of upper-air currents was not as great as that nearer the ocean surface. He watched the direction of the racing clouds. Eight points to the right of where they proceeded from would lie the spinning storm center.

Cadigan did some simultaneous figuring and praying. He was going to have to fly the hurricane. If his fuel held out and his ship held together—

The accompanying winds of a hurricane blow contrary to the hands of a clock in the northern hemisphere. At the edge of the hurricane the wind incurves 2 points along the circle. After the sky is overcast, there is a lull in the erratic winds, just before the first violence of the hurricane hits.

Tropical Mariner's Handbook

Cadigan took out a light gauge and measured the light tensity. To his left, the sun showed like a cooling ball of fire, but the skies were overcast with fleecy, racing, gray clouds, growing heavier and darker by the minute. If his calculations worked out right, and he could find the little island of Perno down there in the heaving, darkened sea, he would arrive near Perno simultaneously with the first outer winds.

He drew a circle on his chart, the upper left sector just touching Perno. He put eight compass pointings along the left half. With a two-degree incurve, the winds would travel along the forward edge of the hurricane from W SW at the bottom to W to W NW to NW to N NW to N and finally to N NE at the top.

A cross wind caught and shook the plane. It came due out of the west. At a thirty-mile velocity. He kicked his rudder and rode the wind east. Ninety-five plus thirty would make one twenty-five.

Sweat popped out on Cadigan's forehead while he rode that wind. He took another draw on the flask. He was trying to hold right-angle courses so as not to lose position. It grew darker. Beneath him the sea showed white.

Cadigan rode the west wind until the clouds to the northeast traveled almost due east. He checked altitude. The ship had been forced down four hundred feet. The barometer was bouncing downward and his compass wavering. Cadigan kicked over the rudder and set off on a W NW course. The sky was going dirty, dark copper. At two thousand feet the roar of the seas came over the hum of the motor.

Cadigan took the last of his liquor as his air mileage reached five hundred and sixty. He was flying against an erratic twenty-five-mile wind, a wind whipping in at a tangent between the west wind he had just left and the outward winds of the hurricane.

At five hundred and sixty-three miles Cadigan dropped down to the surface of the dark, scudding ocean. The winds were more violent, cutting across the swell and lifting great, trailing plumes of spume. The frothing ocean took on a different roar. It boiled in places, became all boiling. Great geysers of water hurtled skyward as if spit up by a giant in the depths.

A tight smile came to Cadigan's lips. He wiped his forehead. Beneath were the Fernando Cays, beginning fourteen miles southeast of Perno. The scent of spices suddenly wafted through the air. Then the wind went dead. There was an ominous, tense quiet, followed by a distant, raging whistle.

Cadigan forced himself to be calm. He might pour the barrel and he might be crashing on Perno in four minutes. He had, roughly, fifty miles of fuel left at present speed, or forty miles if he gave it full speed. Yes, he might pour the barrel and make Perno. Or he might bump into a hundred-and-ten-mile cross wind before he got there.

Even crash landing into a heavy gale is tricky. Perno was a bare dot down in those thundering seas. He could try a crash landing cutting across the island from the south and hitting the northern shore. If his speed was a hundred and ten on landing and the wind seventy, he could crash all right.

But if a ninety-mile wind ripped under the slower winds of that altitude, he would be carried back across Perno and land in the shallows to the southward—with a full-force gale beating him off shore.

There was no telling about that ground wind. And Perno was lost in the frothing blackness of the ocean.

VERY CALMLY he kicked the ship off from true course and flew straight north into the violent shriek and deathly black pall. There was a sobbing sound from ahead. The ship plunged into a

swirling, dark chaos. Cadigan braced himself. The sob turned to a roar, and the ship was flung violently on its right wing. The ship was kicked and flung and beaten. Rain slashed like driving seas. To the right, flashes of lightning came through the ripped and writhing masses of clouds.

"Steady," Cadigan said to himself. He felt the wind and headed with it. Out of the west, fifty-mile force. Cadigan kicked around and headed back into it. He throttled up to one hundred and twenty. The ship bumped, but roared back defiance at the storm.

The wind veered from W NW to NW to N NW. It was too dark to see anything. What the force of the fresh winds were he could only guess. He dared not drive with them for checking. If the winds were now seventy, he was all right.

Sweat popped through the driving rain washing off his forehead. He dropped altitude and knew the winds were stronger. The storm made a frightful din nearer the water. A sudden harder bumping told him he was over land or shallows.

Perno is surrounded on the north side by two and a half miles of teacherous shoals, over which, in rough weather, drive hard, fast seas. During the early part of hurricanes, these seas drive almost due south, often crossing the narrow, ledged beach and flooding the lower grounds of the island.

Tropical Mariner's Handbook

The wind shifted to due north, shrieking out of the blackness. Cadigan throttled back to ninety-five and faced the wind. He felt of his sheaf knife at his waist, picked up the two empty fuel tins with their harness and slipped into it. He tied the anchor line around his middle and grabbed the anchor tightly.

"Now," he said to himself quietly. Very gradually he dropped altitude, until whirling, driven brine tasted on his lips. Very calmly he sat the ship down on the wild waters of that terrible black-

ness. At the instant he felt himself thrown violently from the cockpit he yanked his rip cord.

Cadigan felt himself flung by the winds. He hit the water and bounced into the air. With a thunderous boom the parachute opened and dragged him racing southward.

Desperately he clung to the anchor. The parachute whipped him, snapped him over and through the mountainous, driven seas. He was half drowned in seconds. One boot was ripped open on a coral reef. He was twirled through the air like a pivoted weight. The winds and the sea beat him madly.

Through fading consciousness he heard the hollow roar of breakers. Wild, frothing waters tore at him, pummeled him, knocked the wind from his lungs and forced a way down his throat. He was dragged beneath water, jerked over ledges that would have killed him had the pace not been so fast. He got a mouthful of sand and felt sharp salt grass rip his lips and face.

CADIGAN counted ten and dropped the anchor. His middle was nearly torn in two. His body was snapped onto a hummock. Only the driven spume of the ocean reached here, but the driving rain was nearly as bad.

Cadigan forced a numb hand toward his knife and slashed the parachute cords. He lay panting and groggy and

sleepy, his consciousness slowly leaving. He fought for his senses. A ripping wind spun him over three times, thumping his battered body badly.

He forced his shocked brain to work. He slashed the fuel-can gear. The wind whipped the cans away from his body.

Cadigan pulled himself back along the anchor line and loosed the anchor. He kept it alongside, dragging his body through inches of water, because no man could even crouch in that wind. Five times the wind caught him on high ground and whipped him through the air. Five times Cadigan dropped the anchor and felt himself snapped violently back to earth.

In a flash of lightning he found the road. Painfully he crawled along, clawing, scrambling, and half swimming, for the road ran with twelve inches of water with a strong current. He came to a shack rattling in the wind. Somehow he got the attention of those inside and staggered across the threshold.

"Medicine for Vera Stetson!" he screamed above the storm.

A dumfounded man was too surprised to speak. He knew this Steve Cadigan. Who in the islands didn't?

"H-h-how did you get here?" the man screamed back.

Cadigan gave a half-drowned, half-crazy laugh. "There are things you can't do, but I've done 'em! I flew." He tripped over his anchor and fell—



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*Once was
enough!*



*"Don't stop! If
they catch us
now, we're lost."*

by Crawford Sullivan

MOST ANY ONE who has been along Fort Street has heard of the Bilge and Binnacle Club. The club is located in the back of Karamoz's Saloon—not where the pool room is; you pass through the pool room and then enter a big, stuffy parlor filled with old copies of the *Shipping News*, books stolen from the seamen's institute and frayed leather chairs that were taken off the *Minnie K.* before she was junked.

The Bilge and Binnacle Club was

founded three years ago by Knut Olsen, a hard-jawed sea captain and philanthropist. It was his dream to establish a social club exclusively for seamen with high moral standards. On shore, Knut Olsen was a great advocate of harmless recreation and brotherly love. At sea, however, he drank nothing but Irish whisky and would knock any man galley-west who failed to call him "sir." It was his weakness for liquor which caused him to smack a reef off the coast of Sumatra last June and descend to

Davy Jones' locker with all hands aboard and six cases of Irish whisky.

When Istvan Karamoz heard of Knut Olsen's untimely passing, he breathed a sigh of relief. For three years he had been threatening to oust the Bilge and Binnacles from the back room of his saloon, but was prevented from doing so by his wife, Aslaug, who was Knut Olsen's sister. Just when Istvan had made up his solid little mind to turn every man jack of them out on the street, a lawyer came along with Knut Olsen's will. It seems that Knut Olsen had done a profitable bit of gun running down in South America, and had amassed twenty thousand dollars. Fifteen thousand of this was willed to Aslaug.

The other five thousand was bequeathed to the Bilge and Binnacles, for the purpose of securing an adequate clubhouse.

When the glad news arrived, about fifteen members were in town—seven sleeping on cots in the clubroom. Immediately, President "Tug" Raffin called a meeting to decide how the money should be spent. Every man showed up: "Little Clancy," "Rat-line" Sam, Joe Lemon and even the four Zyman-ski brothers, who had recently beaten a charge of mutiny.

"Mr. President!" shouted Joe Lemon authoritatively. "I move that we buy Heitmeyer's Hotel for our clubhouse. It's clean. There ain't many rats——"

"Shut up!" cried Tug Raffin, trying to pound his gavel through the table. "You're out of order. First is the treasurer's report."

Rat-line Sam stood up. "I'm a rope-an'-canvas man," he began, unloosening his collar. "I'm an old salt what craves excitement. If any o' you paint scrapers had sailed with me durin' '97, when we hit that typhoon on——"

Tug whammed down the gavel. "How much dough's in the treasury?"

he demanded. "We want a report, not an oration."

Sam's mustache bristled. Then he said, "One dollar an' ninety-four cents, dues collected. Five thousand dollars received from the late Knut Olsen."

"That makes five thousand and one dollars and ninety-four cents," Tug said. "Sit down, Sam. Now. Has any one a suggestion regarding a clubhouse?"

"I don't care what kind of a joint we have," piped Little Clancy, "just as long as we have a big room with stuffed fish on the walls. There's nothing so peaceable as to sit in a room, surrounded by stuffed fish——"

"How about the Heitmeyer Hotel?" insisted Joe Lemon.

"He owes Abe Heitmeyer twelve bucks!" Little Clancy squeaked. "That's why the big bum's trying to——"

"You're a liar!" cried Joe Lemon. He leaped from his chair and squashed the palm of his hand against Little Clancy's nose. The red-headed man went sprawling. Somebody jerked him to his feet. He lashed out at Joe Lemon with both fists. Joe stuck out one long, thin arm and grabbed Little Clancy by the coat. His fist cocked back, then started on a circular arc toward Little Clancy's left eye. Before the fist connected, a heavy object sliced the smoke-filled air and hit Joe's head with a sharp *clok*.

Joe Lemon reeled and turned to the front of the room, slightly raddled. Tug Raffin put him in a chair. Joe Lemon's arms hung loose, and his sour face wore a strangely beatific expression.

"Let that be a lesson," admonished Tug Raffin, picking up the heavy gavel he had thrown. "Don't go poking anybody that's not your size——"

"I could 'a' licked him!" scowled Little Clancy.

THE four Zymanski brothers came marching up to the president's chair in a body. Beneath four sets of whiskers

lurked fierce frowns. Eight fists were knobbed. The eldest brother acted as spokesman.

"We haff a proposal to make," stated Zymanski No. 1. "Instead uff a clupp-house, it is better we should giff the money to the cause!"

"What cause?" growled Tug Raffin.

"The United Moofment for World Betterment!" replied the Zymanski, slapping his chest. "Down with politics——"

"Wait a minute," rasped Tug, his broad face furrowed. "You birds aren't trying to say we should go in for—anarchy?"

The four heads bobbed. "With fife thousand dollars we could change the gofferment," recited Zymanski No. 2. "We could print papers——"

"We could buy bombs——"

"Down with capitals!"

"Why, you four baboons!" snarled Tug Raffin. "This is an American club—for American merchant seamen. And you want us to go around blowing things up! Well, of all the lousy——"

Without further ado, he planted his fist into the nearest Zymanski's stomach. The man emitted a guttural *whoof* and folded to the floor. Another brother rushed in to take his place. Tug rapped his knuckles on a whiskered chin and whaled his left fist at a fanlike ear.

"Kill him, Tug!" howled Little Clancy, galloping to the fray like a fire horse smelling smoke. He bashed a chair on the head of the fallen Zymanski just as the man began to show signs of life.

"Scuttle 'em!" yelled old Rat-line Sam, climbing on the table. "It's a fight! Get in on it, men. Out with your belayin' pins!"

The other club members needed no encouragement. There was nothing so beloved to the Bilge and Binnacles as a good, rip-snorting, hell-roaring fight. Some took sides with the Zymanskis; not because they were anarchists, but be-

cause there were only four Zymanskis to eleven others. Joe Lemon, in particular, was happy to get a crack at Tug Raffin and Little Clancy.

In a few seconds Tug Raffin had his back on the floor, with two Zymanskis pounding at his face. He gouged one in the eye with his thumb, then tore a handful of whiskers from the other. As the first man howled, Tug plunged his fist at a furry jaw, making the big white teeth click like castanets.

By that time, "Bottle-nose" Billings had approached from behind with a picture cord tied into a running bowline. Billings slipped the bowline around a thick Zymanski neck and yanked until his victim resembled a wall-eyed pike.

Chairs were clattering like hail on an open bridge. Books flew from every side, filling the smoky room with fluttering pages. Three Zymanskis were down. Tug got to his feet, slashed his fist viciously—and the fourth went looping. Joe Lemon picked up a lamp stand and was about to bend it over Tug's tow head, when a voice sounded from the end of the room.

"Gentlemen!" said the voice in a sticky tone. "Gentlemen—cease quarreling!"

Every eye turned. Every head swiveled. Fists opened; arms dropped; all fighting ceased. Bottle-nose Billings loosened his bowline. The four battered Zymanskis crawled from the floor.

A dapper man in a gray fedora and pearl-gray spats was standing by the doorway, pulling off a pair of pearl-gray gloves.

"Sligg!" hissed Little Clancy in absolute disgust. "We might 'a' known he'd be around! Simon Sligg!"

II.

THERE IS not a seaman on the West coast but what knows Simon Sligg, the shyster lawyer. Sometimes he is in San Francisco; sometimes, in

Portland. But right now he was standing at the doorway of the Bilge and Binnacle Club, cataloguing every man before him with a brief, jerky glance. His gray, crafty eyes were about the same color as his natty suit, his gloves and spats.

"I am sorry to have interrupted your meeting, my friends," said Simon Sligg in his oily voice. Sligg looked like a shark, but when he spoke he exuded oil like a codfish. "Hearing of your good fortune, I could not restrain from coming here to offer my congratulations."

"If you think you're going to ace in on anything, Sligg, you'd better steer another course," advised Tug Raffin, wrapping his face into a scowl. "That five thousand was left to the Bilge and Binnacle Club. And we're going to use it——"

"Be calm, sir," said Simon Sligg, extending both hands like a preacher blessing his congregation. "I come on an errand of good will. I come to offer you gentlemen a proposition——"

"We ain't interested!" cried Little Clancy.

Simon Sligg darted a narrow glance that glued the tongue to Little Clancy's palate. "Within a week I can double your money," he stated. "I give you this opportunity out of the goodness of my heart. Wealth means little to me, as you well know."

"The slob," muttered Joe Lemon. "He'd murder his own grandmother for a plugged dime."

"Quiet!" said Tug Raffin. "Give the lubber a chance to speak his piece."

"Thank you." Simon Sligg bowed. "I will be brief. You may be interested to learn that a valuable consignment of Cambodian silver has been entrusted to my care. As any seaman knows, there is an exceedingly high tariff on Cambodian silver."

No one had ever heard of Cambodian

silver; so they all nodded wisely and kept their mouths shut.

"The silver," continued Simon Sligg, "is aboard the ship, *Plankton*, which is cruising offshore. I hired Captain Barclay to bring it in last night with his launch, *Jaffa*. But, unfortunately, the *Jaffa* ran into some rough weather and foundered, bearing half the cargo. So the *Plankton* is still waiting to be relieved of the rest of it."

"You've gone in for smuggling, eh?" asked Tug Raffin.

"Not at all," was the unctuous reply. "Due to a loophole in maritime law, it is perfectly legal for an American ship to bring in a cargo of Cambodian silver. The *Plankton* is a French vessel. Therefore, if she lands with the cargo, there will be an exorbitant tariff. But you gentlemen know all that."

IT sounded fairly plausible; so, after a short period of muttering, the men waited for Simon Sligg to proceed.

"There is no group of men so near to my heart as you members of the Bilge and Binnacle," continued Sligg fervently. "And, since I am short of ready cash, I give you this chance. There is a fine launch for sale at Pier 29, the *Jingle Belle*. For five thousand dollars you can buy that launch and bring the cargo of silver into port. I guarantee that you will double your money; and we will all work together in a great coöperative venture!" He clasped his hands and stared vacantly at the ceiling.

"Throw him out!" yelled "Scuttlebutt" Scoggs. "We ain't goin' in for no hocus-pocus like that. Knut Olsen left that five thousand for a clubhouse and——"

"Do this orderly," instructed Tug Raffin. "We'll take a vote on it. All in favor of splicing up with this land-going octopus, stick up their fins——"

"One moment!" Simon Sligg broke in. His flabby gray face was hard; his



"Gentlemen! Gentlemen—cease quarreling!"

eyes gleamed like little pearl buttons. "Before you take a vote, let me remind you that I am acquainted with each of you in a legal, as well as personal, manner. I helped the Zymanski brothers out of that mutiny charge; but I could bring every one of them into court again——"

"Traitor!" snarled the first Zymanski.

"And that isn't all," rasped Sligg. "The law would be glad to know that Joe Lemon has a wife in San Diego and one in Spokane. And there's Little Clancy. Stuck a knife in a man down in——"

"He was a chink!" protested Little Clancy.

"You can get five years for it, anyway," retorted Sligg. "I have evidence on every man here. Bottle-nose Billings, Rat-line Sam, Scoggs over there—and Singin' Kelly. He forged a mate's ticket in '29——"

"You've got nothing on me," said Tug Raffin.

"No," admitted Sligg. "Except that you're the president of this organization; and you've been willfully harboring a gang of dangerous criminals."

"We ain't criminals!" fumed Little Clancy. "Everybody makes mistakes."

"You'll make a mistake if you don't deliver this cargo for me," said Sligg ominously. "Proceed, gentlemen. Vote! All in favor of buying the *Jingle Belle*, raise their hands!"

With the exception of Tug Raffin, every hand in the room went up.

Simon Sligg's maw drooped toward his chin in a villainous, upside-down grin. He picked up his hat and started for the door, amidst a welter of scowling faces. "Be at Pier 29 at noon," he told Tug Raffin. "And don't forget the five thousand!"

Just then the door flew open, and into the room shuffled a thing which caused even placid Simon Sligg to gasp. Sligg had to look twice before he could tell

whether the thing was animal or mineral. Finally he decided it was a man—a great brute of a man with long, straggly hair hanging down over his broad face. Two vacant, wallowing eyes glimmered out from beneath the mat of hair, and a long, jib-sail nose sniffed at the murky blue air. The newcomer crouched in order to get through the doorway without bumping his tawny head, then swayed unsteadily to a chair. The chair creaked as he sat down, dangling his arms to the floor.

"What—what's that?" stammered Simon Sligg.

"Your guess is as good as mine," said Tug Raffin. "The boys found him wandering around the docks last week. He's drunk all the time—doesn't even know his own name. We've tried to sober him up; but it's like giving a sponge bath to a tiger."

"Ugly looking brute," ventured Sligg.

"That's what we thought," Tug said. "Little Clancy calls him The Monster."

"He ain't a bad sort, though," declared Little Clancy. "He was machinist's mate on the *Saratoga*. Then his girl ran away with some landlubber, an' he took to drink. I found out that much."

"Hmph!" snorted Simon Sligg. "I wouldn't have the filthy creature near me. He's probably wanted for murder somewhere."

Sligg's words seemed to penetrate that straggly brown head, and "The Monster" wove around, fastening his glinty eyes on the dapper lawyer. Simon Sligg gave a nervous cough and scuttled out the doorway.

III.

THE *Jingle Belle* turned out to be a fifty-foot open launch with a cabinlike shelter up forward and a hull that squatted into the water like the after end of a pelican. Old Rat-line Sam wept bitter tears as he handed over a five-

thousand-dollar check and received a sheet of paper marked "paid in full."

"Imagine *me* buyin' a contraption like this!" he said. "I won't set foot on it, Tug Raffin—you can lay to that. Sink me! A lousy, shovel nosed motor boat!"

"Quit your beefing," growled Tug. "The Bilge and Binnacles are paying for this, not you. If you didn't want to buy it, why'd you join up with Sligg?"

"I'll tell you why," said Simon Sligg. "Three months ago Rat-line Sam threw a beer bottle at Alderman Kramer. I saw him do it. Struck the alderman in the forehead during a parade. You know what they do to people who throw beer bottles at aldermen?"

"Keelhaul 'em, I suppose," said Rat-line Sam glumly. "But 'twasn't my fault. I was splicin' the mainbrace a wee bit that day——"

"Drunk and disorderly," said Sligg, making a mental note. "Say, Raffin. How does this launch look? When will she be ready?"

"Any time you want," replied Tug. "You're sure all this is on the level? About the silver, I mean."

"Absolutely," said Sligg. "You can choose your crew and leave to-night."

"Aren't you going along?"

"Er—no," said Sligg, running one gloved finger along the boat rail. "I have an important meeting. Besides, I get seasick very easily."

"Why wait until to-night?" demanded Tug. "I'd just as soon start right now."

Sligg shook his head. "No," he said. "During the day, the *Plankton* cruises about at sea. She will put into Rupert's Cove at midnight. You must meet her then."

"O. K.," agreed Tug. "We'll sail from here about eight. That gives us plenty of time."

After inspecting the launch carefully, Tug Raffin went to "Scaley" Tompkin's Fish Parlor for a glass of beer and a few oysters. After the fifth beer, who should

walk in but Captain Royce MacSwiffen, commander of the coast-guard cutter *Polk*. MacSwiffen had a bad eye and a limp.

"S'matter, skipper?" asked Tug, shoving out a chair.

"One beer," signaled Captain MacSwiffen to Scaley Tompkin. "It's those damn, dirty smugglers again," he said to Tug. "Rough weather night before last, and we caught the lights of a launch heading northward. Gave 'em the signals; but they wouldn't lay to, so we hoisted a ten-pounder across their bow. Then I'll be blowed if they didn't start popping back with a couple of tommy guns. I was in the wheelhouse, when a shot plunks through the window. Jumped for'ard and socked my glim on a wheel spoke. Then I sprained my ankle running for the bridge ladder. Dirty rats!"

"Didn't you get 'em?"

"Get 'em!" thundered Captain MacSwiffen. He took the beer mug from Scaley Tompkin's hand and splattered foam all over a man eating clam chowder at the next table. "Get 'em! Why, we blew the muggle-faced sculpins all over the ocean! Tore 'em out of the water! Smashed their mud scow into so many pieces the dogfish can use it for toothpicks!"

"Good work." Tug nodded. Then, with a sudden afterthought: "Hey, skipper—you know the law around here. Is there any tariff on Cambodian silver if it's brought in by——"

"Lousy sea slugs!" raged MacSwiffen, feeling his bruised optic. "If I ever lay my hands on 'em again——"

"I thought you blew 'em out of the water?"

"Sky high! But we didn't find the real smuggling ship—the ship they got their cargo from. She's roaming around the coast somewhere. We'll be watching for her from now on. And when we find her, we'll give 'er the same medi-

cine we gave to Barclay and his blasted *Jaffa*."

"*Jaffa*?" Tug's brown face suddenly became limp and loose. "Did you say *Jaffa*?"

"Sure." Captain MacSwiffen nodded, filling his gullet with beer. "It was the *Jaffa*, all right. I always did think Barclay was a smuggling rat. Now what did you say about some kind of silver?"

"Nothing," hastened Tug. "I've got to be going. Glad to have seen you again, skipper."

"Hey!" MacSwiffen called after him. "You're on the beach now. Maybe you can pick up some information about these smugglers. If you do, let me know——"

"So long!" Tug flipped a four-bit piece at Scaley Tompkin and legged it out the door. He headed immediately for Fort Street.

THE Bilge and Binnacle clubroom was deserted, except for Joe Lemon, who lay snoring on one of the improvised cots. Tug kicked him in the ribs. He woke up cursing. "We've been double-crossed!" Tug barked. "That shark-faced lubber, Sligg, has done us up proper!"

"Wha'smatter?" inquired Joe Lemon sleepily.

"The *Jaffa* didn't founder night before last, like Sligg said. She was sunk by a cutter—trying to smuggle contraband!"

"Too bad," said Joe Lemon, rolling over.

Tug gave him a boot in the nether regions. "Get up," he growled. "Try to locate our men. Tell 'em to meet me at Pier 29. I'll be down there as soon as I find Simon Sligg!"

But finding Simon Sligg was no easy task. Tug Raffin went to every bar, gambling den and beer hall along Fort Street. Finally he decided to look for Simon Sligg at his home. It was half past seven when Tug pounded his big

fist on the door of the little cottage. A washed-out blonde, with sad, spaniel-like eyes, peeked through the grating.

"You Mrs. Sligg?" asked Tug.

"I guess so," said the woman.

"Where's your husband?"

"Somewhere around," said Mrs. Sligg, staring over his shoulder.

"Is he home?"

"Sometimes," she replied vaguely.

"Well, where is he now?" demanded Tug.

"He was home last night," said the woman. "I know because he left cigar ashes on the front-room floor. He always leaves ashes on the floor when he's home."

"Listen, lady," explained Tug irately. "I want to locate your husband right now!"

"So do I," sighed the woman. "Do you know where I can find him?"

"That's what I've been trying to ask you!" Tug sputtered.

"Oh," said Mrs. Sligg in a peeved tone. "Why didn't you say so in the first place?" She slammed the grating in his face.

Tug stalked away from the door, swearing softly. He walked half a block and then turned a corner. At that moment he saw Simon Sligg emerge from a barber shop.

"Ump!" grunted Simon Sligg, as he felt rude hands grasp him by the coat collar. "What is this?"

"You're coming with me," blared Tug. "You and your coöperative venture! Trying to turn honest seamen into smugglers!"

"I'm sorry," said Sligg brusquely. "I have an appointment——"

"I'll say you have," Tug told him. "And you'd better think up a lot of explanations before you face the Bilge and Binnacles. I hope they tear you into little bits!"

Simon Sligg gave a quick jerk and twisted his collar from Tug's grasp. In a split second he was sprinting down

the street, gray spats twinkling. Tug made a baying sound and started after him. Sligg vaulted a fence when he passed the Atlas Lumber Yard, and headed across a vacant lot.

Tug was hot at his heels when he rounded the corner of Shroeder's Brewery; but Simon Sligg turned the corner, flattened himself against the wall and stuck out one foot—sprawling Tug Raffin's loping form all over the sidewalk. Tug scrambled up with a skinned elbow and blood in his eye. By that time, Simon Sligg was half a block away.

TUG RAFFIN was built to fight, not to run; while Simon Sligg knew how to scoot like a scared antelope. But after covering ten blocks, Sligg began to grow weak in the legs. His chest ached, and the breath hissed through his teeth like the whistle on Tony Boggio's peanut wagon. Taking a quick glance over one shoulder, Sligg saw Tug coming up behind him.

With instinctive cunning, Sligg barreled around another corner and ducked into an alley. It was a blind alley, but Sligg did not find that out until he reached the end and bumped into a row of garbage cans. They were big garbage cans; so Simon Sligg crouched low behind one of them and held his breath.

When Tug Raffin reached the alley he saw no sign of Simon Sligg. He cursed unpleasantly, believing that his quarry had given him the slip for sure this time. Then he decided to take a look down the alley, although it seemed unthinkable that Simon Sligg would be so careless as to run down a blind alley. Upon reaching the row of garbage cans, he peered through the gloom in every direction. No sign of Simon Sligg. Only the furtive meowing of a tomcat and the stench of garbage. Tug wrinkled his nose and whiffed the noxious air.

It is in cases like this that fate takes a hand. Simon Sligg would have escaped

Tug's attention entirely if he had not instructed Anton Popoloffski, the barber, to paste his hair down with *Bouquet de Lilac*. Although it is Simon Sligg's favorite hair salve, *Bouquet de Lilac* has an aroma which, if not so disturbing as garbage fumes, is three times as pungent.

A couple of deep sniffs told Tug Raffin that Simon Sligg was in the immediate vicinity. Nostrils windward, Tug walked straight to the spot where Sligg stood crouched. Sligg did not wait to be caught. Instead, he bounced up and threw his gloved fist at Tug's jaw. His other hand was clenched around the neck of a milk bottle, and the bottle descended on the seaman's head with a whopping crack. Tug staggered back.

Sligg started to cut and run; but his spatted foot had scarcely left the ground before Tug's grapple-hook fingers were fastened on his neck. Sligg babbled something, only the words seemed to be rattling down his windpipe instead of from his mouth. Tug held him out at arm's length, like a boxer sizing off a punching bag. His right fist swished forward, and the knuckles crunched on Simon Sligg's chin. Sligg tightened from the waist up; his legs turned to jelly. Then he gave a low sigh and tried to lie down on the cobblestones. Tug Raffin hoisted Sligg over his shoulder and started for Pier 29.

JOE LEMON greeted Tug as he climbed aboard the *Jingle Belle* and heaved Sligg's inert body onto a bench up forward. "I could only find three of the men," explained Joe Lemon. "I got Sam an' Billings an' Kelly—Lord! What happened to Sligg?"

"Sligg is a snake," announced Tug to the men standing aft. "He is in with a ring of smugglers, and he's tricked us into buying this boat for the purpose of bringing contraband silver ashore."

"What'll we do?" asked old Rat-line

Sam. "We can't get our money out of this mud-pusher."

"We'll have to go through with it," said Tug. "For this once we'll have to stoop to the level of smuggling. It's for the sake of the Bilge and Binnacle Club—and it's what Knut Olsen would have done, had he been in our place."

"But if we do this," inquired Singin' Kelly, "will Sligg pay us the ten thousand?"

"He will or else——" rumbled Tug. "That's why I brought him along. If there's any danger, Sligg will be in on it, too."

"You're a seaworthy man, Tug," said Rat-line Sam. "Reminds me of the times I smuggled coolies to Peru on the——"

"Turn her over," ordered Tug. "We've got to get to Rupert's Cove before midnight."

Joe Lemon nodded, climbed forward and gave the motor a twirl. It coughed a little, then started up with a steady, puttering roar. Lines were tossed off, and the launch edged away from the dock.

"Ahoy!" yelled some one from the pier. It was Little Clancy, with a huge, lumbering creature at his back. "Wait for us! I got news—big news!"

The boat churned water while he leaped aboard. The straggly, hair-faced giant followed him.

"What's the news?" inquired Tug, steering for the lighthouse at the end of the breakwater.

"It's about The Monster," said Little Clancy joyfully. "He sobered up for a minute and remembered his name. He's called Herbert."

"Herbert!" sneered Tug. He cast a quick look at the sodden, slaving creature sitting on the bench at his side. The man's eyes stared through the mat of hair like luminous pie plates.

"That ain't all," added Little Clancy. "He remembered the girl's name. You know—the dame who jilted him."

"Snap on those running lights, Joe," said Tug, kicking the engine into full speed.

"Her name was Erminie," stated Little Clancy. "Erminie Hooper. Some guy stole her from him; an' The Monster has sworn to kill the guy if he ever finds him——"

"Who cares?" said Tug in a harsh tone.

The Monster looked up at Tug morosely, blinked one baleful eye, then lapsed into a sodden coma. His liquor-soaked mind was nearly as blank as that of the unconscious Simon Sligg.

IV.

AT EXACTLY MIDNIGHT, the *Jingle Belle* reached Rupert's Cove. The sea was running in black, foam-toothed furrows, and a heavy fog had rolled in from the west, forcing Tug to use the searchlight on the bow. Close in to shore, scarcely visible, was the black hull of a ship. She had no mast lights, and the bridge and fo'c's'le were dark.

"Blink your searchlight three times," said Simon Sligg, who had regained consciousness shortly after leaving the harbor, and who was intensely peeved at being brought along.

Tug blinked the light. An answering ray glowed through the fog. "That's the *Plankton*," said Simon Sligg. "Pull alongside."

They came alongside, and a cluster light popped down at them from the *Plankton's* deck. "Ha!" said a voice from above. "You 'ave come for ze cargo—yes?"

"You guessed it, Froggie," shouted Tug. "Heave it over."

"I am Captain Planchet," said the voice importantly.

"I don't care if you're Napoleon," growled Tug. "Toss over that cargo. We want to get out of here."

"Oui," replied the voice. "We make

A CO-OPERATIVE VENTURE

ze cargo march, *tout de suite!* You 'ave seen notheeng of the coast guard—no?"

"Not yet," answered Tug. "But they'll be hot on our tail if you don't start that cargo marching pretty pronto!"

The Frenchman rattled off some orders. A winch grumbled, and a sling filled with large, hardwood boxes hovered over the side, landing on the *Jingle Belle's* low deck. Two more slings completed the load.

Tug started the propeller churning before the boxes were even tied down. "Be careful, man!" cautioned Sligg. "You want the stuff to go overboard?"

"*Bon soir!*" called Captain Planchet from the distant darkness.

"Give me a hand," said Singin' Kel trying to lash a rope to a stanchion. "Hey, Joe——"

"Watch out for that cargo!" brayed Simon Sligg, as the boxes began slide.

A-whooooo!

Tug Raffin nearly leaped out of his skin. The mournful sound came from just off the port bow. It was a ship's whistle. Immediately following the blast a powerful searchlight limned up ahead—slicing the fog with its cold, blinding beam. Tug swerved the launch to starboard, and the boxes skated athwart the ship.

"What're you tryin' to do?" stormed



Rat-line Sam. "Belay those snake tracks! Steer a straight course!"

"And run head-on into a coast guard?" returned Tug. "See that light? That's the——"

"Aho-ooy!" boomed a big voice across the water. Tug recognized Captain MacSwiffen's thunderous tones. "Lay to! This is the coast-guard cutter, *Polk*!"

TUG snapped out the lights and threw the throttle into full speed. The *Jingle Belle* slithered over the water.

"Heaven save us!" wailed Simon Sligg.

"Lash down that rope!" yowled Joe Lemon. "Of all the clumsy——"

"I'm no magician!" bristled Singin' Kelly. "The line's too damn short!"

"Lay to!" came MacSwiffen's voice again, this time through a megaphone. "Lay to—or we'll fire!"

"Don't stop," pleaded Simon Sligg. "If they catch us now, we're lost!"

"We'll only get a few years at the most," said Tug. "Smuggling silver isn't such a terrible——"

"But it isn't silver," said Sligg. "It's—it's dope!"

"Huh?" Tug's hands nearly slipped from the wheel. "You mean, we're carrying a cargo of——"

"Unfortunately, yes," said Sligg. "I was to get twenty thousand dollars from Abe Heitmeyer for delivering this cargo to him. Abe is a big dealer in——"

Tug's jaw quivered. "Why you filthy scum——"

Wa-ash! A heavy shell slit the water across the *Jingle Belle's* bow. A second later Tug heard the report of a cannon. Simon Sligg's face drained white, and his shark mouth hung open abjectly. From aft came the yelping voice of Little Clancy.

"You tryin' to murder us!" he screamed to Tug. "That coast guard's

so close I could spit on her taffrail! You better lay to!"

"Get rid of those boxes!" bellowed Tug. "Throw 'em overboard. We'll have to keep out of their way till we lose the evidence!"

Little Clancy uttered profanity that should have scorched his lips. Rat-line Sam was hanging onto the stern flagstaff, his white mustache curling in the breeze. Joe Lemon and Singin' Kelly were still arguing about the length of a rope, and Bottle-nose Billings hurled epithets at Captain MacSwiffen through the fog. Only The Monster remained blankly unaware of the bedlam that had broken loose.

Tug yanked the wheel and hairpinned the boat back toward Rupert's Cove. It would take time for the cutter to swerve around, and by then he hoped that the launch would be out of range. A shell grazed the *Jingle Belle's* stern, cracking off the top of the flagstaff. Rat-line Sam lurched onto the deck, with the flag wrapped around his face. Joe Lemon hauled him to his feet and shoved him forward. A machine gun began to crack from the *Polk's* side.

"Thar she blows an' thar she breaches!" howled Sam gleefully. "Pull while the squall lasts! Damn it—wisht I had a gun!"

SOON the launch began to put distance between herself and the cutter. MacSwiffen's voice rang from the bridge as he sensed his prey getting away from him. The searchlight twirled like a great eye, and the *Polk* nosed about like a gray whale. The thick fog was all that saved the *Jingle Belle* from complete and rapid extermination.

Fire belched from the foredeck of the cutter. Whining, screeching shells whistled over Tug's head and plumped into the water on both sides. Little Clancy was trying to heave the heavy boxes overboard, but having slight success. The boxes slid in all directions;

and, after capturing one, it was a herculean chore to lift it from the wallowing deck.

Nevertheless, the *Jingle Belle's* sturdy, puttering engine and whirling propeller clipped the furrowed sea at a good speed. Tug had no idea where he was going. The soupy fog had spread a thick, wet blanket around him, and the windshield was opaque with mist. Simon Sligg blurted something incoherent into his ear. Tug shoved him away; and at that instant a shot ripped into the flimsy roof above Tug's head, splintering wood and shredding canvas. The windshield fell in a thousand shatters.

"This is the end!" whined Sligg. "They'll kill us! Not that I mind for myself. But what will happen to my wife? My poor—Erminie!"

A grating, animal growl came from the bench at Sligg's side. Sligg looked around and, by the icy glow of the *Polk's* searchlight, saw The Monster lift his matted head. One wide, baleful eye opened slowly and shined yellow through the veil of hanging hair. Then the other eye opened, and both orbs stared dragonlike at the face of Simon Sligg. Ponderously, The Monster unraveled his huge frame from the bench, until he stood four hands higher than Simon Sligg—his head protruding through the smashed roof.

"Erminie?" said The Monster in a ghoulish voice. "Did you say—Erminie?"

"Of course," snapped Simon Sligg. "Erminie is my wife."

"Not—Erminie Hooper?" said The Monster haltingly.

"How did you know that?" said Simon Sligg, somewhat bewildered.

"I was engaged to her," came the chanting reply, "until you took advantage of her girlish innocence and stole her from me. I have been looking for you!" The Monster's long arms

reached for Simon Sligg like two dericks.

SLIGG gave a cry of despair and stumbled aft. He shoved Little Clancy aside and tried to hide behind the stack of boxes which Singin' Kelly had managed to lash to the port rail. "Don't let him at me!" pleaded Sligg.

"Here!" said Joe Lemon, grabbing The Monster by the arm. "If you want to wrestle, wrestle with these boxes!"

The Monster nodded, braced his shoulders against the boxes and tore the whole bunch of them from their lashings. They went skidding across the wet deck, helped by the rolling sea. One box struck Bottle-nose Billings in the shins, nearly knocking him overboard. Billings thought The Monster had done it intentionally; so he lunged at the man with both fists. By that time, The Monster was busily engaged in throttling Simon Sligg, and he brushed Bottle-nose Billings away with one hand. This only made Billings madder than ever. With a hopping leap, he climbed on The Monster's wide back.

Until now, Tug Raffin's attention had been centered on the cutter which followed behind, peppering the *Jingle Belle* with sporadic shots. Suddenly he turned around and saw boxes sliding from one end of the deck to the other, and a tangle of arms and legs squirming near the broken flagstaff.

Joe Lemon was trying to pry Bottle-nose Billings off The Monster; Singin' Kelly struggled to loosen The Monster from Simon Sligg; and Rat-line Sam was shouting encouragement to all parties concerned. Little Clancy paid no attention. He was too busy chasing the skidding boxes.

Meanwhile, the *Jingle Belle* went thumping through the sea. Her engine was red-hot. Steam soared from the little air vents on the bow. Now and then a bullet whacked against her sides,

gouging out chips and splinters. With a quick swoop, the launch buried her prow in a mound of water. The deck slanted, and the boxes came hurtling forward.

At that moment Tug Raffin felt as though he had been kicked by an elephant. The sliding boxes avalanched upon him; one of them ended up, pinning his body against the wheel. Tug gave the offending box a hearty shove, but another ran in to take its place, squealing along the deck like a thing alive. Tug's hands left the wheel; the boat careened and more boxes wriggled in, sweeping his feet from under him. He rolled under the starboard bench, kicked the boxes out of his way, and tried to get back to the wheel.

His fingers were only two inches from the lower spoke when a screeching shell fragment plowed into the steering gear, smashing the wheel and spindle. The *Jingle Belle's* engine continued to pop along merrily as the unbridled launch cut capers.

Old Rat-line Sam was wild with superb excitement. "Such a night!" he jabbered. "Ain't had so much fun since I hit that typhoon off Formosa——"

"Give me a hand, you lubbers!" bawled Tug. "We've got to get these boxes overboard——"

BUT his companions were too preoccupied to pay any attention. Simon Sligg was hanging half over the rail, his face purple. The Monster was calmly choking him to death with one hand, as his other hand jabbed blows into the face of Bottle-nose Billings. Joe Lemon had resumed his argument with Singin' Kelly over the proper way to lash a rope, and both were trading punches amidships. Little Clancy was still trying to capture boxes.

"You crazy fools!" howled Tug. "Don't you realize that MacSwiffen's right behind us? We've got a busted

gear and a cargo of dope! Don't you monkeys get enough fighting ashore, without picking a time like this——"

He wobbled aft and leveled his fist against Singin' Kelly's cheek.

"Quit that!" growled Joe Lemon. "This is my fight——"

"Not now," said Tug. He smashed Joe Lemon in his puckered mouth, flopping him to the deck. Then Tug stalked aft and gave Bottle-nose Billings a sharp kick on his bruised shin.

"Ow!" blurted Billings. In an instant Tug knocked him spinning.

When The Monster saw Tug at his side, he curved his face into a stupid grin and proceeded to squeeze the last ounce of life from Simon Sligg. Sligg already looked like a dead shark, but his arms were still flipping weakly.

"Let go of that man," barked Tug.

"No," said The Monster.

Tug eyed him carefully. The brute was almost seven feet tall. Tug tried to seek out his most vulnerable spot. "If you don't do as I say——" Tug threatened.

"No," said The Monster.

Tug belted him on the whiskers. The Monster gave a grating chuckle and shook Simon Sligg like a cat worrying a mouse. Tug straightened to his toes and whipped his fist into one of those pie-plate eyes. The Monster sniggered and pushed his big, clammy hand against Tug's face. Spluttering with rage, Tug whaled into The Monster's midriff—landing hard, quick, brutal punches that steamed straight from the shoulder. The giant was unfazed. In final desperation, Tug threw a wild punch at his enemy's ear. His fist hit nothing but air, and Tug lurched awkwardly against the giant's massive body.

A look of intense suffering crept over The Monster's features. He loosed his hold on Sligg and fell to the deck, wailing with agony. Tug stared down at

him in amazement. The man was wallowing back and forth, yowling at the top of his voice.

Suddenly a cold searchlight beam played through the fog and became riveted to the launch's after deck. "It's them!" megaphoned Captain MacSwiffen. "Fire!"

Red flame belched from the cutter's forepeak, but the *Jingle Belle* danced out of the searchlight's beam and zigzagged deeper into the fog. When the cutter's light found her again, she was maneuvering in circles, leaving a ring-tailed wake. Another shell skipped her bow, but it was like trying to hit a rabbit with a pea shooter.

Tug was helping Little Clancy heave one of the fatal boxes overboard when he heard Rat-line Sam shout: "Breakers ahead! Stop that blasted engine!"

He looked up and saw something black and forbidding loom off the port side. The launch was heading straight for it. He lunged for the engine controls. A hail of lead rained into the smashed cabin structure. Flame roared up from the engine vents. Tug gave the throttle a jerk, and the lever came off in his hands. The Devil was hot behind in the form of Captain MacSwiffen. But ahead there was no deep-blue sea. Instead, Tug saw the high, wall-like sides of the steamer, *Plankton*.

Raking water, flame spurting from her bows, the launch kicked up her propeller in a final mad swing and whammed head-on against the steamer's steel-plated hull.

Little Clancy shrieked; Rat-line Sam emitted a last jubilant howl; boxes spilled over the rail—and the *Jingle Belle* turned up her stubby pelican tail and plummeted to the bottom with one valiant *swish*.

The crunching impact hurled Tug Raffin through the shredded roof. He plunked into the ocean and started to claw water. With sudden regret, Tug

remembered that he had never learned how to swim.

V.

"ONE—TWO. One-two!"

Tug twisted around and found Captain MacSwiffen sitting on his thighs, digging stubby fingers into his ribs. "What the hell?" he muttered weakly.

"Artificial respiration," said MacSwiffen in a curt tone. "Section 9, Seaman's Manual."

Tug shoved MacSwiffen off and climbed to his feet. He was on the deck of the *Polk*. Propped against a bulkhead, wrapped in blankets, were the five Bilge and Binnacles. Only Sligg and The Monster were missing.

"Thees ees an indignity!" squabbled a familiar voice. Short, mustached Captain Planchet came goose-stepping across the deck at the point of a rifle. "Thees ees ze insult! Some one shall make answer to France——"

"Take him to the brig, boys," instructed Captain MacSwiffen. "Put him with the rest of 'em——"

"You're making a mistake," protested Tug. "We're not to blame. It was that——"

"There, there," said MacSwiffen, grasping his hand. "Don't get excited. We know all about it. Grimshaw told us everything—how you intentionally lead us to the smuggling ship, even at the risk of your lives. But you shouldn't have taken such chances. We didn't know the launch was yours. We might have blown it from the water—like we did the *Jaffa*. But how did you find the location of the *Plankton*? Grimshaw said——"

"Not so fast," interrupted Tug. "Who's Grimshaw?"

"Steady man," said MacSwiffen anxiously. "That's him, over there. Herbert Grimshaw. He used to be machinist's mate on the *Saratoga*. Old friend of mine."

Tug blinked. Standing in a companionway was The Monster. Only his

hair was combed back from his eyes, and he did not look so monstrous. Also, he seemed quite sober.

"Sorry if I caused you any trouble," said Herbert Grimshaw, bowing his head sheepishly. "I've been drunk for months—but the cold water snapped me out of it." He bent low and whispered into Tug's ear: "I hope I told MacSwiffen the right story. I didn't want to get you men into trouble."

"Thanks," said Tug. "You did all right."

"This'll be a great thing for you, Tug," stated MacSwiffen. "The government's offered a reward of ten thousand dollars for these smugglers. French officers and Chinese crew. They've been unloading dope all up and down the coast."

"Golly!" piped Little Clancy. "That'll buy a swell clubhouse for the Bilge and Binnacles——"

"Captain," said a blue-coated seaman, "we just fished another one of 'em out of the water. He was hangin' onto a timber." The seaman supported the limp, dripping form of Simon Sligg.

"Hold him back!" begged Sligg, shying away from Herbert Grimshaw. "He can have Erminie, if he wants her!"

"Huh?" said the ex-monster, bewildered. "Would you really give her up and——"

"Have you seen Erminie lately?" Tug

interfered. "If you haven't, you'd better take another look. She's slightly loose, up here——" He tapped his forehead.

Herbert Grimshaw understood. "I don't want any man's wife," he said. "I'm changed. Think I'll join the navy again. I used to be heavyweight champion of the Pacific fleet."

"That reminds me," said Tug. "When we were mixing it up on the *Jingle Belle*, I hit you with everything but the rudder, and you still stood up. Then I fanned your ear, and you flopped all over the deck. How come?"

Herbert Grimshaw winced at the thought. "You stepped on my foot," he said, cringing. "It's my only weak spot. Oh, my! Did you ever have corns?"

THE Bilge and Binnacle Club collected their ten thousand dollars, all right; but they are still trying to decide on a clubhouse. Joe Lemon still harps on the Heitmeyer Hotel, because Abe Heitmeyer will sell it cheap, now that he is in jail on a smuggling charge. Little Clancy insists on a room with stuffed fish, but, beyond that, no plans have been laid. Simon Sligg is running around loose, since no one can prove anything on him. But Tug Raffin and all the rest are firmly resolved that Sligg will never again interest them in another coöperative venture.



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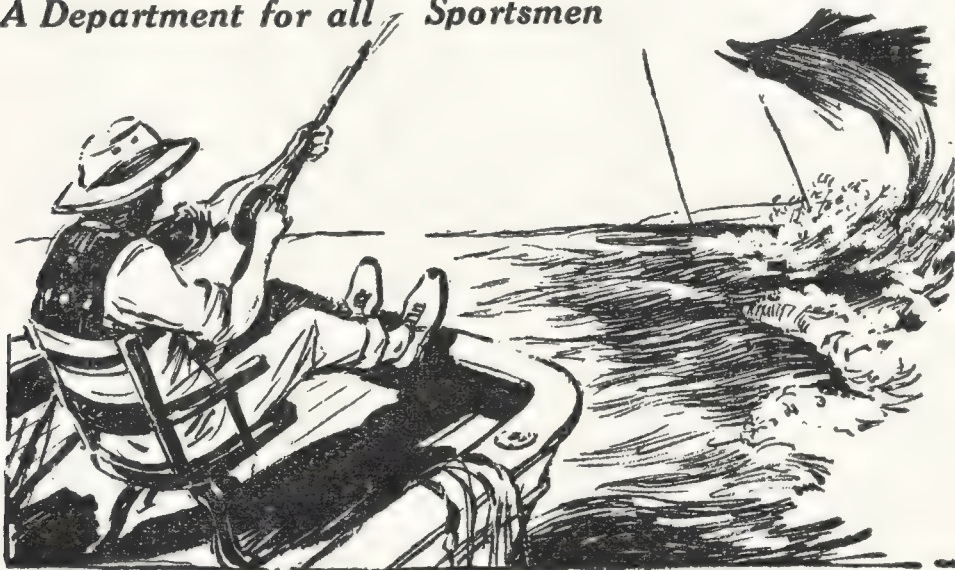
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Rod and Gun News

A Department for all Sportsmen



by DONALD STILLMAN

Southward, Ho!

FORTUNATE INDEED is the sportsman who, while snow blankets the fields and bitter cold wraps the northlands, can pack his bags and tackle case and head for the land of golden sunshine and blue fishing waters—Florida. As this is written, reports from the Florida fishing camps indicate that salt-water fishing there has been excellent.

The three principal big-game fishes of Florida waters are the sailfish, the tarpon and the marlin. The best of the tarpon fishing does not begin until the spring, but a few white marlin are caught through the winter, while sailfish are plentiful.

So far as the winter angler is concerned, Florida Gulf Stream angling may be considered sailfishing. Of

course, other species swim the blue water, but they are either of lesser importance or are not often encountered. Thus, while a marlin may be a grander prize than a sailfish, even white marlin are not caught every day, while the big blue marlin do not appear in numbers until later in the season.

The wahoo is another grand fighter which, on the Florida side of the Gulf Stream, is taken not too frequently. Dolphin are numerous, but often run small in size, and a dolphin strike means a mutilated sailfish bait and valuable time lost in replacing it. A large barracuda wages a splendid battle, but the light-tackle angler dreads the strike of a large amber jack, for such an event may mean an hour or so to play the fish to gaff.

The amber jack is one of the most underrated game fish in the world. To



The elk are a great attraction to visitors of the Rocky Mountain National Park.

be sure, its battle is not spectacular like those of the surface-fighting fish, but for speed and pulling power it has few, if any, equals. The amber jack has been dubbed the "reef tuna," but it is my opinion that a 30-pound amber jack could pull twice its weight of tuna all over the Gulf Stream, while for stamina and staying power the amber jack undoubtedly is superior.

The bonita is another familiar figure in the Gulf Stream, but is valued chiefly as sailfish bait, for a fresh-cut strip from the side of a bonita is among the best of sailfish lures.

But it was the sailfish that first tempted anglers to troll the Gulf Stream, and in those waters the species still reigns supreme.

It is doubtful if the sport of angling offers any greater thrill than the moment when a sailfish first appears behind a trolled bait. The sailfish attacks a bait by tapping it with its spear, not by spearing it with the point, as has been claimed by some writers. This tap is felt by the angler, who immediately permits his line to run back a matter of 40 or 50 feet. Then the reel drag is reset and the angler strikes. If he has been lucky, the fish may be hooked.

If so, the angler's first intimation of

this fact is a mighty pull, feeling like a fish weighing several hundred pounds. Then the line begins to smoke off the reel, as the sailfish starts off on its first wild run. This is the dangerous moment for the inexperienced angler, who probably will attempt to hold too hard and break line or rod. When a sailfish makes up its mind to go places, it goes, and may not stop short of 400 or 500 feet. At the end of the first run it will probably jump or tear across the surface of the water on its tail, much like a marlin. I have seen a sailfish jump more than 30 times in the three quarters of an hour it was on the hook.

It would be impossible to describe the battle of a sailfish, for no two act just alike. Much depends upon the size of the fish, the tackle used, and the position of the hook in the fish's mouth. However, it is safe to assume that unless the fish is hooked in a vital place, it will indulge in long, fierce runs and startling series of leaps. And the angler will be assured of plenty of thrills, even in those cases where he is so unfortunate as to lose his fish.

Fewer Duck Hunters

OVER 200,000 duck hunters quit the sport or failed to purchase "duck stamps" during the 1936 fiscal year, according to a survey of stamp sales and income expenditures made by the More Game Birds Foundation. Records of the post-office department, just made available, reveal that but 424,970 of the migratory bird-hunting stamps were sold during the 12 months ending June 30th last, as compared with 635,344 during the 1935 fiscal year.

Whether the drastic slump in sales is continuing during the present duck-hunting season probably will not be definitely known until after the close of the department's current fiscal year, next summer.

The slump is attributed to new and

increasingly restrictive hunting regulations. "Little hope is held for modification of these restrictions until waterfowl can be increased—particularly on the remaining most important breeding grounds in Canada," the foundation declares.

When the duck-stamp law became effective, March 16, 1934, predictions were made that it would provide \$1,500,000, or more, annually for establishment of waterfowl refuges in the United States. Total sales for the first two years combined, however, amounted to but \$1,050,314.

Provisions of the law require that 90 per cent of the income "shall be available for the location, ascertainment, acquisition, administration, maintenance and development" of migratory bird sanctuaries. The balance is assigned to "administrative expenses."

The foundation survey reveals that although \$724,851 of the duck-stamp income has been expended thus far, not an acre of refuge land has been acquired with the money.

"No land for refuge use has been purchased out of the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, as the bureau has had emergency and special funds for such purchases during the past two fiscal years. It was necessary to use duck-stamp funds for the development of many of these new refuges, and to improve some of the old areas, since no other appropriation was available," Ira N. Gabrielson, Chief of the United States Bureau of Biological Survey, explained to the foundation.

Elk Herds Active

THE ELK HERDS in Rocky Mountain National Park move down to their winter range in the broad valleys on the east slope of the park, where they gather in large numbers to spend the winter. The condition of the herds this year is excellent, reflecting the fine

growing season for their food plants. A count of more than 20 per cent of calves in herds checked by wild-life workers indicates a substantial increase in total numbers.

The elk, together with abundant deer in the readily accessible parts of the park, are a great attraction to visitors. Last fall saw the largest travel on record, when hundreds of motorists entered the park, despite the fact that transmountain travel over Trail Ridge Road had been blocked by drifting snow. This heavy travel was attributed, by



During the 17th Century, Cat Cay was a pirate rendezvous, and to this day it hides an authenticated pirate treasure.

Superintendent Thomas J. Allen, Jr., to the fact that nowhere in the United States may large herds of elk be seen in their native range by such large numbers of people, and with as little effort as is required in Rocky Mountain National Park.

A circle drive of less than fifteen miles passes through Moraine Park, Beaver Meadows, and Horseshoe Park, three centers of concentration of the herds. On the way, the motorist has many opportunities to secure snapshots of entire herds idly feeding, young bulls not ready for real combat, playfully but-

ting and pushing with locked antlers, or giant stags, proudly showing themselves within a few yards of the roadside. One day more than 50 elk were grouped in the open meadows in front of the Moraine Park Museum, and during the afternoon hours the road was lined with cars, when tourists stopped to enjoy this display.

During the mating season the bull elk is heard periodically throughout the day, bugling defiantly, with vigorous notes that serve warning upon all others of his kind that he is ready for battle in defense of his many wives. The late afternoon and evening hours bring the bugling to its climax, and many lovers of this woodland music resort to the elk range, where, for hours, they listen with all of the ardor of Missouri fox hunters.

This symphony of wild musical notes is but preliminary to terrific struggles. A sight worthy of the patience and skill of stalking necessary to its enjoyment is a duel between two mighty bull elk. With mad charges, crashing of antlers, and grueling struggle, the battle may last for more than an hour, with intervals of rest and maneuvering, and occasionally results in the mortal wounding of one of the combatants.

Grim evidence of such a fatal battle



With all the ado over ducks, the importance of Canada is being overlooked.

was discovered this week in Beaver Meadows, where the body of an old bull, with antlers measuring over 50 inches of beam, was found dead, his side torn with a long gash inflicted by the sharp antlers of his adversary. The ground for yards around was torn by the hoofs of the fighting stags.

It is not always the most belligerent that are successful in courtship, however, as evidenced by an incident witnessed recently. An old bull with about a dozen cows was drawn from his herd by the bugled challenge of a younger stag. In his absence, another young bull came out of a thicket and drove away 4 of the cows. When the first pretender fled, rather than face the fury of the older bull, the stag returned to his cows, and, discovering his loss, started in pursuit of the young Lothario. Seizing this opportunity, the first bull returned and took away most of the remainder of the cows, leaving the old stag but 2 or 3 of a once fine harem.

While hunting is forbidden in Rocky Mountain National Park, and in the territory immediately surrounding it on the east, where the State of Colorado has established a game preserve, there is never a closed season on camera hunting, and visitors are being encouraged to use this method of securing lasting memories of experiences with wild life.

Action Needed to Prevent Duck Extermination

AMERICA'S WILD DUCKS and the \$100,000,000 sport of duck hunting "won't be worth the price of a box of shotgun shells" unless a move is made soon to preserve remaining unspoiled waterfowl nesting areas in Canada, according to a survey of the situation made for *Colliers*.

New and complicated Federal-hunting regulations have a "million sportsmen, bird lovers and officials of the United

States Bureau of Biological Survey calling one another names in increasing crescendo," the article states. While all the ado over ducks is agitating hunters and nonhunters alike, the importance of Canada, now found to produce 85 per cent of the ducks, is being overlooked, it warns.

An inventory of the wild-fowl population in the northern half of the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta showed 31,500,000 breeding birds. Fully 80 per cent of the nesting places in the southern part of the great mid-continental breeding range were reported dried up, and but 5,500,000 ducks were found there.

"Obviously our first move now should be to preserve the most important and operating portions of our duck plant in the northern half of the Canadian provinces," Ray Benson, author of the article, points out.

"Canadian officials would be glad to work with us on this, if we, here in the United States, will play ball with them. Duck shooters in the United States pay 2 or 3 dollars a year for hunting licenses. They spend from 10 to 100 times that amount for things necessary to enjoy their sport.

"Yet of all the millions of dollars spent on the sport of wild-fowling, probably not over 3 per cent goes into channels that mean production or even protection of the birds. If the sportsmen themselves, however, would tackle this Canadian situation *on their own*, there soon would be all the ducks they, or any one else, could reasonably ask for."

Frank Troeh King of the Traps

AFTER filling your old pipe with your favorite brand, pull your rocker up to the fireplace and give thought to a few shotgun records—26 years of registered trap shooting by Frank M.

Troeh, the Portland, Oregon, clay-target wizard.

You wouldn't judge a shooter by his target-breaking activities over a year's time any more than you would pass judgment on a baseball player by his record of one season. It is what he does over a period of years that counts.

"Ty" Cobb won undying fame as a batsman and base runner, not because he led the American League one year, but because he led it more often than any other player. There never has been another Ty Cobb, not even an imitation.

Frank Troeh is the Ty Cobb of trap shooting. He may not lead the field each year, but over a period of years he outclasses all other shotgun artists. In 1912, his first year at registered clay targets, he averaged only .9257 on 1900 targets. The following year he did little better, when he finished the season with .9262 on 2550. He raised his average the following year when he averaged .9374. The trap-shooting world began to take notice of him, however, in 1915, when he won a number of shoots and boosted his average to .9636. In 1918 he hit the 97 per-cent mark on 6845 registered targets, and he has never averaged less than 97 per cent in any season since that time. In fact, this great gunner has an all-time registered average of over 97 per cent on all his targets since his introduction to the game in 1912.

Troeh has won just 17 State trap-shooting championships, 6 more than his closest rival, Steve Crothers of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Years ago Troeh made his home in Vancouver, Washington, and he won the Cougar State trap-shoot crown 7 times between 1914 and 1922. Then he moved to Portland, where he has won the Oregon State title 10 times. On two different occasions, in 1931 and 1933, the Portland ace has broken 200 straight, to pave his way to the championship. In 1928 and 1935 he busted 199 out of a possible

200, to cop the scatter-gun laurels of his State.

Here are Troeh's State championship records:

1914	Washington championship	96 out of 100
1916	Washington championship	97 out of 100
1918	Washington championship	98 out of 100
1919	Washington championship	298 out of 300
1920	Washington championship	295 out of 300
1921	Washington championship	196 out of 200
1922	Washington championship	198 out of 200
1925	Oregon championship	197 out of 200
1927	Oregon championship	198 out of 200
1928	Oregon championship	199 out of 200
1929	Oregon championship	193 out of 200
1931	Oregon championship	200 out of 200
1932	Oregon championship	196 out of 200
1933	Oregon championship	200 out of 200
1934	Oregon championship	198 out of 200
1935	Oregon championship	199 out of 200
1936	Oregon championship	197 out of 200

Institute Will Investigate Fish Resources

RESEARCH into the production of fish for angling, in the lakes and streams of the country, by improvement of waters rather than by artificial planting, is asked of the American Wild-life Institute by its technical committee, headed by Dr. Aldo Leopold, professor of game management, University of Wisconsin. The report of Dr. Leopold's committee, made public by the institute, to-day, pays tribute to the improvement in the fish-carrying capacity of streams which was brought about by the CCC, in Michigan and several other States.

The CCC, the report says, used dams, covers and other structures to improve the streams, and their experiments, notably in Michigan, yielded a great increase in catchable trout.

"Until it is known just how this increase came about," the report says, "it is impossible to adapt the technique successfully to other States. A series of experimental streams, located in various regions and carefully measured and censused, would throw light on this

problem. Analysis of how structural improvements affect the fish problem must go hand in hand with the further elaboration of structural designs and materials."

The technical committee asserted that the effect on fish of the harnessing of streams for power, storage, navigation and irrigation had been "a mass destruction."

One way in which research projects into fish conservation could help check this, the committee said, was to scatter those projects about the country in numerous localities, to build up local centers of opposition to ill-considered navigation or power projects, destructive of native wild life. "Experience shows that the momentum of the rolling pork barrel is otherwise irresistible," the report said. It designated "the local university" as the best place for building up local knowledge on wild-life conservation and local sentiment in favor of it.

The fish-research program of the committee calls for a study of fish cropping in lakes, and of erosion, silting and the poisoning of streams. "Silt-ing and warming of streams has moved the southern boundary of the trout belt steadily northward, just as slick-and-clean farming has pushed the native game birds out of their original range," the report said. "To this shrinkage in fish habitat has been added the destruction of reproductive capacity and the poisoning of adult fish by stream pollutions.

"Basic changes in regional streams must be adequately measured and analyzed for their effect on fish life, if the country is to have an effective fish-restoration program."

The technical committee of the institute, in addition to Dr. Leopold, is composed of Gardiner Bump, superintendent of game, New York State conservation department; George C. Em-

body, professor of fish culture, Cornell University; Carl L. Hubbs, Institute of Fisheries Research, University of Michigan; and Herbert L. Stoddard, Coöperative Quail Study Association, Thomasville, Georgia.

A six-phase research program, drawn up by the committee, is now before the trustees and officers of the American Wild-life Institute for adoption and financing. The research is also to include studies of farm, forest and range game, migratory waterfowl, fur species, rare and nongame species now threatened with extinction, and wild flowers.

Foster Resigns

AT A SPECIAL MEETING of the board of directors of the National Skeet Shooting Association, Inc., the following major matters were officially acted upon:

1. The acceptance of Mr. W. H. Foster's and Mr. G. W. St. Amant's resignations from the board of directors.
2. The nomination and unanimous election of Mr. G. Tapply and Mr. John O. Emerson to fill said vacancies.
3. Nomination and election of Homer S. Tilton to the office of president of the association.

Subcommittees were appointed by the new president on the following important revisions of the board's multiple functions. A finance committee; a committee on systems to facilitate the best possible handling of all records, including individual averages, records of the scores from all registered shoots, registry of events, etc.; a committee on promotion to handle such matters as new and improved instruction booklets, annual record booklets, a bulletin service to shooters, clubs, State and sectional associations, the firearms and ammunition industry, and sporting good dealers, and any other important promotional material; a public-relations committee to bring together, in the most



Some progress is being made in the research concerning the proper environment for wild turkeys.

advantageous manner, the wealth of material now kept in shooters' and other interested individuals' minds, to further the best interests of the sport of skeet; and, a committee to take up immediately the matter of the third national skeet championships to be held in 1937.

After due discussion of the various important points the meeting was adjourned, to allow committee meetings to reconvene for further general discussion and official action at the earliest possible date.

Several items of vital importance to general skeet shooting were discussed in detail, such as the formation of an advisory council made up of shooters selected by popular vote among the registered skeet clubs, State associations, and sectional associations, to work with the board of directors in an advisory capacity, helping the board with all major problems and contributing at any time their suggestions for further improvement of the game.

A technical committee was also recommended to be appointed as soon as possible, to include authorities on shooting among sports writers and representatives of the firearms and ammuni-

tion industry, who have shown a keen interest in the sport of skeet.

Cat Cay

WITH the opening of Cat Cay Manor there is offered to an exclusive clientele one of the most unique resorts found on the Atlantic or Pacific coasts.

On the western rim of the Great Bahama Bank, only sixty miles from Miami, this peaceful, isolated island paradise is flooded with tropical sunlight and bathed by the indigo waters of the Gulf Stream.

During the 17th Century, Cat Cay



Browse-eating game ruins its own range.

was a pirate rendezvous, and to this day there lies hidden in the coral rocks or shifting sands, an authenticated pirate treasure. Henry Morgan, the infamous renegade, about whom romantic and adventuresome tales have been written, was given Cat Cay by the Crown. Upon his appointment as governor of Jamaica the island reverted back to the Crown. It was later granted to William Henry Stuart, for services to the empire. Subsequently, it became the possession of Captain Arthur Samuel Haigh and, in 1918, Milo B. Strong, who lived there until it became the property of the

present owner, L. R. Wasey, New York advertising man, who developed and beautified the island for his winter home.

So high has been the enthusiasm of guests at Cat Cay during the past few years that Mr. Wasey, and his business associate O. B. Winters, decided last winter to augment the facilities in order to extend its hospitalities to a limited number of guests.

Every architectural precaution has been taken to preserve the charming intimacy possessed by the island when it was reserved exclusively for the present owner and his friends. Stone guest houses, with red-tiled roofs, face the sea. Their white walls may be seen as far off as Bimini, and an approaching yacht or plane may sight them from miles away. The manor house has been converted into a great English lounge and game room. Adjoining the manor house is a walled courtyard for dancing and dining, and beyond is the vaulted dining hall with massive fireplace at either end.

Cat Cay is protected by the Gulf Stream from the chill blasts that sometimes steal down from the north. This little island, with its shimmering white beaches, its whispering palms and its soft trade winds, maintains an equable climate throughout the season.

To the fisherman, Cat Cay is the island heart's desire. Within sight of the red tiles of the manor house, giant marlin knock down the outrigger. Not more than a mile offshore sailfish often run in schools, and that streak of light, the bonefish, feeds in the very harbor of the island. During the month of June the giant tuna smash the stoutest tackle. The reefs abound with amber jack, grouper, and barracuda. A little farther out kingfish, dolphin, bonita and wahoo are freely taken. Plans have been made with some of the most famous guides in the country to conduct parties from Cat Cay, to try their skill with big fish.

A Billion Fish

WISCONSIN will plant 1,000,000,-000 fish in 1937.

The equivalent of more than 7 fish for every person in the United States is the projected quota of the Wisconsin conservation department for next year, announced H. W. MacKenzie, department director. The billion figure will be a record never before approached by any State in the country. Wisconsin's fisheries division is now equipped and manned for the job, and favorable weather conditions for spring spawn gathering will make it possible, said MacKenzie.

To date in 1936, Wisconsin has planted 566,842,594 fingerlings and fry, from the State's 31 fish hatcheries—over 43,000,000 more fish than were stocked in 1935. Among 17 varieties planted, muskellunge totaled nearly 7,000,000, while trout accounted for nearly 35,000,000.

In keeping with Wisconsin's long-range program of active conservation—full use of natural resources without injury to those resources—the conservation department has for more than thirty years planted never less than 100,000,000 fish yearly in Wisconsin's 7,500 inland lakes and 10,000 miles of trout streams.

First planting of fish in Wisconsin was 62 years ago, from a private hatchery at Dousman—100,000 Pacific salmon liberated mostly in Lake Mendota at Madison. First State-owned hatchery opened a year later, in 1875, near Madison. During its early years capacity was run up to 500,000 fish yearly. Still operating on the same site, it now rears 5,000,000 fish annually, and at present is being enlarged for even greater capacity.

To fulfill the billion-in-1937 quota, the 31 hatcheries operated by the conservation department are now undergoing improvement and expansion.

B. O. Webster, superintendent of State fisheries, announced that biological research essential to better understanding of fish propagation is being actively pursued. Four new hatcheries will be built and placed in operation in 1937 and 1938.

Development this year of portable, pure-oxygen aerating tanks for live-fish transportation is one of the major reasons why Wisconsin has set its 1937 fish-stocking goal at the hitherto imaginary figure of one billion. This new system, according to Webster, will revolutionize fish distribution in Wisconsin, and will permit truck transportation of fish up to 300 miles. A fleet of twelve 1½-ton trucks is planned, which will largely supplant the State's railway fish car "Badger."

Research to Save Game

LOCAL STUDIES of the factors which make for the increase or decrease of 9 important species of farm, forest and range game will be required before any intelligent national program for conserving them can be adopted, the technical committee of the American Wild-life Institute has informed the



A few antelope remnants continue to increase, while others dwindle and disappear.

trustees of the institute, in a report made public. It named the species as the Western quail, bobwhite, grouse, wild turkey, pheasant and Hungarian partridge, cottontail, deer and antelope.

The committee, headed by Dr. Aldo Leopold, professor of game management of the University of Wisconsin, is recommending, to the trustees, a study of these 9 species for institute financing, at least in part.

Of the need to study these species, the technical committee says: "Excellent life-history work on California and Gambel's quails needs to be tested in practice. Studies of scaled quail need to be executed. It will be of great value to know, in detail, just how live stock limits the productivity of quail range."

"Studies of the bobwhite, begun in Georgia, Wisconsin and Iowa," the committee said, "are disclosing fundamental laws applicable to all gallinaceous birds, but the degeneration of the bobwhite in New England has never been explained."

The fact that CCC companies are now altering the cover of large amounts of land where grouse would naturally range, and that a great deal more of such land is coming into public ownership, means that studies of grouse conservation need to be started as quickly as possible, the committee reports. No study ever has been made, it says, of the Western grouse.

The committee notes, with gratification, that some progress is being made in the research concerning the proper environment for wild turkeys on private game preserves in the Southeast. It observes, however, that no study ever

has been made of the Southwestern or Merriam turkeys. The committee asks that studies be made of the recession of population vigor among the pheasants and Hungarian partridges of Oregon and New England.

"A similar decline might well occur in the now thrifty stands of South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa," the report says. "The general failure of ring-neck pheasants and Hungarian partridges in the South is still a mystery."

As for research into ways to save the country's deer and antelope, the committee says: "Browse-eating game ruins its own range, while seed-eating game does not. All over the country valuable spots of deer range are now threatened with grave injury to both range and deer. These trouble spots are worst where no predators remain to keep the herd in balance with the carrying capacity of the range. Intelligent adjustment demands a local knowledge of food habits and this, so far, exists only in a few States."

Of the antelope, the committee says: "We still are unable to explain why a few antelope remnants have continued to increase until they destroy the carrying capacity of their range, while others dwindle until they disappear."

Besides Dr. Leopold, the committee is composed of Gardiner Bump, superintendent of game, New York conservation department; George C. Embury, professor of fish culture, Cornell University; Carl L. Hubbs, director of fisheries research, University of Michigan; and Herbert I. Stoddard, cooperative Quail-Study Association. Their report is to be the basis for a research program financed by the American Wild-life Institute.





Fist and Shovel

by J. Fred Olive

AT THE SOUND of his name, Donald Barry crossed quickly to the scarred door of the mill super's private office and let himself in. The stocky, square-jawed figure seated at the rough wooden desk in the center of the little room thrust a single sheet of paper toward him.

"From the main office—the Old Man

himself," Superintendent King explained crisply. "You went over my head. What's the idea—lost your mind?"

Barry's eager blue eyes fastened on the scrawled signature at the bottom of the page.

"Fine." He grinned. "So I get the job? When can I start, sir?"

"To-morrow," King spat. "And Heaven help you. Chances are old Mike Snyder will bend a shovel over your hard head the first shift." He paused, scowling. "Listen here, kid," he growled, "the Old Man's nutty for sending you out here. That job on Nine is no place for you—not working under Pig Iron Snyder anyway. Say the word and I'll place you out there as metallurgist. Good chance to learn furnace practice—steel making—all that. Phone the Old Man you've changed your mind."

Barry shook his head stubbornly. "Not a chance," he said grimly. "I asked for the job on Nine. You refused. I went to Mr. Ryding. He knew my father——"

"Hell's bells, boy," King exploded fiercely, "don't I? And Pig Iron also. I know they were never friendly. But that's no reason for you to go off half cocked just because your dad was hurt. Yeah, yeah, I know," he added testily as Barry drew a letter from his pocket. "Anonymous letter, from some skunk who's afraid to sign his name. Spells nothing. Wait'll your dad gets out of the hospital and you find what really happened."

"Sorry, sir," Barry said steadily. "I know what happened—a cracked head. What I don't know is—why? And who? This letter"—Barry tapped the missive in his hand—"says I can learn other things besides steel—on Nine."

"Rot!" King snorted peevishly. "Some damn sorehead with a gripe on. Have them in every mill. Drop the idea, kid. Accidents are a by-product of steel making."

"But this letter——"

"Yeah, yeah, I know," King cut in. "And you have the wrong attitude, boy: jumping at conclusions. Suppose Pig Iron and Dave *were* at outs. That's nothing. A hundred men up there stay that way. Any one of 'em would take a crack at him in a minute. Why single

one man? That's a tough crowd, kid; don't barge in there with a chip on your shoulder. Ever see an open hearth roughneck swing a shovel?"

"Ever see me swing these?" Barry swung two freckled fists into view. "Two years at it; intercollegiate champ, heavyweight. Anyway—Mr. Ryding's letter——"

"Yeah, yeah!" King barked savagely. "Old Man's orders. It's out of my hands. All right, you asked for it. Swell job you picked. Freckled fists—against some roughneck's shovel!"

Sorting a card from the application file on the battered desk before him, King wrote a few words across the face.

"Present this to the employment clerk," he growled. "And remember, kid, I warned you. It's a tough crowd; no holds barred. May the saints help you—you'll need it!"

TWIN COLUMNS of shooting flame from adjacent furnaces stabbed at the cross braces high in the top of the building when Barry swung up the flight of iron steps from the pit to the tapping floor the next morning at six. Pausing alongside Nine's throbbing port, he gazed grimly at the two furnaces spewing their molten burden into the yawning ladles set underneath.

"Eight and Nine," he muttered. "Dad and Snyder's furnaces. Neck and neck, still fighting it out."

The seventy-foot column of flame wavered; a vagrant puff of wind whipped a flaming segment above his head. Barry wheeled, bumped sharply into something that yielded abruptly.

"Pardon me," he began, and started back as a knotty fist grazed his nose.

"Pardon, hell!" a voice snarled.

Barry ducked mechanically as a second fist whizzed viciously at his face. Instinctively, he put up his guard.

"Listen, fellow——"

A flurry of flailing arms smothered

his words. Knotted fists pawed furiously at his forearms which moved automatically to guard his face. Behind the air-tight defense Barry's blue eyes goggled in amazement at the undersized figure, naked to the waist, that plunged at him with tigerish fury. Beyond, Barry caught a vague glimpse of helpers, blue furnace glasses pushed high on their foreheads, crowding the alley passage at the port. Don glanced quickly toward them as a faint cheer came from their ranks.

A bony fist slid suddenly past Don's guard, smashed his nose. Don's head rocked back. Swiftly, he spun aside, settled low in a crouch. The small figure bored in, fists pawing the air. Barry's left weaved about like a streak of light, then his right lashed out, square on the button. Don caught the diminutive figure as it slumped slowly toward the rivet-studded floor. The helpers surged noisily out the alley about him.

"Boy, what a beaut!" cried a red-headed helper gleefully. "Right on the knob. But you've played hell now."

Barry's face showed puzzled concern. "Is he crazy? I just bumped him—accidentally."

The limp figure in Don's arms moaned feebly. The helpers drew back uncertainly.

"Lay him down and beat it," the redhead whispered tensely. "He's Pig Iron's pet. Pig'll take you apart when he hears of it."

The limp figure came suddenly alive. It wrenched from Barry's supporting arms, face contorted with passion.

"Damn you," he shrilled. "Just wait! Pig! Pig!" The voice trailed off in a sob of futile fury as the small figure plowed through a lane that opened abruptly in the ranks of helpers.

The helpers, eyes goggling over sagging jaws, stared uneasily after him. A long moment they shuffled uncertainly, then filed out the alley one by one—except the redhead. Don stared

at him, blue eyes filled with comic dismay.

"My sacred aunt!" he gasped. "Am I nuts or is this a goofy outfit?"

The redhead's anxious face lighted with a faintly ironic smile.

"Correct—in both classifications," he agreed dryly. "Plenty nutty if you don't beat it. You've laid profane hands on the most high. That means hell to pay in anybody's language—including the Scandinavian."

The columns of coke flame died slowly down, leaving only a fierce red glare which beat full on the redhead's face. A nameless something in the glare-lighted eyes angered Don.

"Yeah! And you're goofy—if you think I'm running. I'm staying. Going to pay off a little hell myself. This runt—who is he?"

Sudden interest sparkled in the helper's glare-lighted eyes.

"I know all the answers, except one," he answered noncommittally. "You—you're a stranger here. What's your name?"

"Donald Barry."

"Barry! My Lord! Not old Dave's boy?"

Don warmed to the sudden friendliness in the helper's voice. His freckled hand reached out and closed over the brown one the helper extended.

"Lord, I'm dumb," the helper continued. "I heard yesterday you were coming out this morning. I'm new here—just in this month from East Works—so I didn't recognize you. I'm Hurst; second helper for your father on Eight."

Barry's eyes blazed. "And you know the answers! Tell me—what caused his injury?"

Hurst laughed a little stiffly. "Give me time, mister; don't rush me. Is this—er—your usual style—picking on the boss' pet?"

"If it is?" Don challenged.

Hurst spread his hands in a depreciatory gesture. "Then count me out.

I'm a peaceful hombre, with plenty of sense. Anyway—I've heard tales about this Snyder."

Don eyed the helper narrowly. "Lately?"

Hurst shrugged. "Regularly; since I've been here. He's a lucky devil. Nothing ever happens to him. It's always the other fellow!"

BARRY SMILED bitterly. "So it seems. This is the third time for dad. Last year it was a broken arm. Year before a couple of ribs. This time a cracked head. All unexplained. Sounds fishy to me."

"I heard about the other two." Hurst nodded. "They were said to be under—er—somewhat similar circumstances."

"Similar!" Barry's voice was brittlely sarcastic. "That's my idea. This one happened—I hear—in the tunnel."

Hurst's eyes flickered over Barry's rangy form in momentary indecision. Then his mouth hardened.

"Yeah. At one of the water-seal valves. Wouldn't work; Dave went below to see about it. Bolt holding the supporting cable slipped out, somehow. End clamp crowned him. Damned freakish——"

"And Snyder——"

"In the clear. Never left the furnace floor all morning."

Barry's freckled fists knotted at his sides. "So that's it—spooks!" he growled. "On rampage! I think it's time——"

"To use your head!" Hurst cut in sourly. "Just listen—and watch. Especially Pig's pet."

"Who——"

"Snake Lucas—behind his back. Anywhere else it's mister! And did you sock him? Boy, howdy! He had it coming. Damn pimp; arrogant as hell with other helpers. Knows Pig will back him in any play. He's out front now yelling for Pig to massacre you because——"

Hurst broke off, stared up-mill. Helpers crowded the table behind the adjoining furnace, their expectant faces seeming to shimmer in the changing glare like a cluster of agitated masks. Poised on some elevation behind them, pencil head swaying grotesquely, was "Snake" Lucas—eyes blazing!

Hurst groaned. "Lord, I'm sunk. Chatting friendly with the guy that's cold-cocked the royal protégé! That links us. Imagine it, my blue blood with an ordinary steel-mill roughneck; a common fellow who uses his fists!" He shuddered, twisting his face into a mournful knot. "And me such a peaceable young man! Come on, fellow; I'll show you the locker room."

Noon came. Nine panted laboringly under his steam pressure, spewing flame in thin sheets above her doors as the soot-filled checkers choked her draft.

At the whistle blast Don sent his wheelbarrow skidding across the iron floor of the coke shack and took his lunch from a wire hook on the wall. The shack door opened and Snyder came in.

IN THE MURKY GLOW of the single overhead bulb he loomed large and menacing. His huge bulk swayed slightly in uncanny resemblance to some abysmal brute on the prowl.

"Looking for me, Snyder?"

Snyder lurched across the room. "Damn right," he growled. "I got just a word, Barry. You're leavin'—at the end of this shift."

"Leaving?" Don's voice was thin. "Who says so? And why?"

"I do!" Snyder snapped. "Call it what you want. Ill health—furnace lights hurt your eyes—yer hands don't fit—er—shovel—anything!"

Barry's rangy form tensed slowly. "And if I stay?"

"Then it *will* be ill health!" Snyder rumbled heavily. "Maybe a broken

head—er—neck—er—sumpin. Accidents happen 'round this place!"

"Yes," said Don easily. "I hear they do. Dad's, for instance."

"Huh?" Snyder's shaggy head hunched forward. Don could feel his hot breath on his cheek. "Shore, it was—er—accident. What else you think it was?"

"I'm not thinking—yet," said Don soberly. "And I'm not leaving. Anything else on your mind?"

"Hankerin' fer trouble, eh?"

Taller than the huge furnaceman, but lighter in bulk, Don stood with feet planted wide apart, head tilted slightly downward, and stared steadily at the shadowed, narrow-set eyes.

"Listen, you!" he cracked coldly. "Out with it—what's on your mind? If Snake Lucas whined to you that I socked him, it's true." Barry lifted a huge hand before Snyder's face and slowly knotted it. "Here's the mate—if he gets tough again! And that goes for any of his friends, also."

"Gosh a'mighty!" Stark unbelief struggled in Snyder's harsh voice. "Who the hell you talkin' to?"

"You!"

Snyder seemed to grow taller and wider in the half gloom. His long prehensile arms jerked at his sides. Don sensed the violent eruption pregnant in the heaving form.

A huge fist pawed at his face, and in an instant he was the center of a flurry of arms and fists. Snyder's huge body lunged against him, bearing him backward. Don managed to pinion one hand between his arm and body. Grappling with the other fist, he rode the rush back. Twisting out of the half clench as the rush spent itself, Don sent his fist crashing into the snarling face. Snyder snorted with pain. Off guard an instant, as his hairy fist pawed at his pain-stricken face, Snyder was a fair target. Don whipped his right to the nose, shifted his balance and sent his

left crashing to the same spot. Something warm spattered him.

Bellowing his insane rage, Snyder thundered forward, hairy hands pawing the air. Don side-stepped and tried for the nose again, but failed. Snyder's flailing arms struck him, sent him spinning, off balance. One knee bumped something that bounced loosely. Too late, Barry remembered the wheelbarrow. He sprawled across it. An outflung hand jammed against the floor. Sudden, sharp pains shot up his forearm as it crumpled beneath his weight.

Hampered by his legs draped across the overturned wheelbarrow and the nerveless arm twisted underneath his body, Don rolled backward, away from the maddened furnaceman. The toe of Snyder's boot caught him in the side as he turned. Daggers of fire seemed to rip his ribs apart. He tried to lift himself. His senses spun. Dully, inertly, he sank to the floor.

A flicker of motion at the door caught his dimming eyes. Lucas stole in, pencil head thrust forward, eyes peering into the murk. Behind him a second form glided through the door and melted with the denser shadows along the wall. Lucas scuttled across the floor.

"Get 'im, Pig?"

Snyder grunted harshly and pawed at his face with a hand that came away red. Deliberately, he kicked the limp form again.

A WRAITHLIKE FIGURE, shovel in hand, stole unnoticed across the rivet-studded floor and came up behind Lucas. The shovel flashed downward on the pencil head. Snyder half turned as the diminutive form pitched forward at his feet. He was a second too slow. The shovel caught him at the base of his shaggy head.

Struggling painfully up from darkness, Barry found Hurst bending over him.

"Hurt, fellow?"

Barry struggled feebly to raise on one elbow. "My arm—side. I tripped on that wheelbarrow."

Hurst helped him to his feet. Don's arm dangled awkwardly at his side.

"Hospital—can you make it?" Hurst whispered tensely. "Way's clear outside. I'll tell 'em you were called to the gate."

Don glanced wryly at the two forms on the floor. "And you—hadn't you better grab an armful of box cars back to East Works, or—beyond?"

"Me?" Hurst grinned. "Miss the next round? Be yourself, fellow. Here, put that hand in your pocket; steady your arm. Think you can make it now?"

"Surely." Don essayed a few steps and stopped at the door. He jerked his head back toward the darkened interior. "But those two—that shovel——"

"Forget it, mister." Hurst shrugged indifferently. "Another accident—unavoidable. Pig can't squawk; Lucas afraid to. Let the safety department sweat the matter out. Better amble on down and get the doctor's verdict."

The doctor on duty at the emergency hospital frowned professionally.

"Nothing serious. Forearm sprain and possibly a slight fracture of a couple of ribs. We'll strap you up and give you a return-to-work slip. Light job of some kind—I'll arrange it with the foreman."

Outside in the waiting room as he was leaving, Barry nearly collided with Superintendent King. King stared hard at the bandaged arm.

"Hospitaled—the first shift!" he growled. "I told you a shovel——"

"Wrong." Don cut in grimly. "You won't believe it, super, but our side won—with a shovel! But I still think fists are better—if there are no wheelbarrows around."

TEN DAYS Barry pulled doors on the two furnaces while the wracking

pain in his body subsided. Daily his fingers touched Snyder's as he took the steel test, intended for the carbometer, from the hairy hand. About the carbometer shack, the helpers huddled in groups, whispering from the corner of lips that barely moved, their eyes bright with expectancy and suspicion as they regarded the swollen nose and puffed lips of Snyder or tried vainly to catch a glimpse of the hand which Barry kept constantly in his pocket. And always Hurst, bleak of face, shovel in hand, loitered idly near the door when Snyder followed Barry into the shack for the carbon reading.

Eight and Nine were on their last legs when Barry took his place in the line-up again, his side tightly strapped under his sweat shirt.

Halfway through the shift Snake Lucas rapped for a ladle, and five minutes later the two-hundred-ton ladle crane rumbled up behind Nine and set a fresh ladle, stopper set, in the stands.

Then it happened. A miscalculation of distance by the pit craneman sent the ponderous hooks crashing into the lower side plate of Nine. A pin point of white light on the furnace roof suddenly expanded into an oblong block of dazzling whiteness as a flame-eaten roof brick dropped from its place into the molten bath. Even as the steam-driven tar flame spewed upward through the hole, a quarter ring of brick vanished like mist before a morning sun. Flame spread out, fan-shaped.

A sulphurous oath, terrible in its intensity, ripped from Snyder's thick throat. He dived for the tapping lever, bellowing orders. As Barry scooped a shovel from the floor to follow, Hurst appeared alongside. He matched strides with Barry.

"Watch him! He's dangerous; somebody'll catch hell——"

A minute later Nine rolled over and her steel hit the ladle. Another ring of brick gave way in the roof; a third

ring hung quivering under the surging blast of flame that roared out.

Barry grinned maliciously into Snyder's glare-lighted, wrathful face. The huge first helper snorted, gave the tilting lever a vicious extra jerk. The third ring jarred loose.

Narrow-set eyes flaming, Snyder lurched over to the feed door. Shaggy head hunched forward, he stared through it down at the tapping stream.

Peering around him, Barry saw the ladle half filled. Swinging impatiently at arm's length from the ladle was the ponderous ladle-crane hooks, barred from reaching the ladle by the tilted table. Unthinking, Barry jerked the ratchet loose on the windlass and let the heavy table swing back upright.

It bumped Snyder's outthrust head—hard. Snyder roared an oath, whirled about. He jerked the blue glasses from his face. His narrow-set, bloodshot eyes were flaming pools of fury.

A mishap, pure and simple, but Barry saw that explanations would be futile. He evaded the enraged helper's lunging rush, letting his eyes chance a fleeting glance for the location of the cold stock piled about the rivet-studded floor. Snyder spun as if on a pivot, shaggy head lowered, and thundered after him.

With his back to the upright table, heat from the tapping stream beating at the backs of his legs through the yawning feed door, Barry tensed, gathering his muscles like coiled springs under his clothes. Snyder was on him like a cyclone, crashing him backward against the steel table. Head, arms, shoulders burned from the terrific impact. Desperately, Barry twisted, hammering short punches against the shaggy head pressed tight against him. Snyder bored in blindly, his long prehensile arms working like flails in a perfect flurry of blows.

Suddenly Barry relaxed, gathered his feet high up under him, firmly planted against the upright table. Snyder eased

off as he felt Don's body go limp, and in that instant Barry acted. Straight out from the vertical footing he lunged, every ounce of strength in his powerful legs behind his plunge. Careening off balance, they crashed to the floor in a sprawl. Barry whipped to his feet with the speed of a panther, whirled to face the maddened helper. Snyder came up slowly, the rolling curves of his immense body blackly limned against the rufous glare streaming through the feed door at his back.

Waiting, tensed, Don was vaguely aware of the excited helpers who crowded the alley passage, their popeyed, heat-tanned faces bobbing crazily in the changing light. Then a flurry of motion in their ranks drew his eyes and he saw Hurst break through. Hurst dived at a spot behind Don and came up with the diminutive form of Snake Lucas struggling in his grasp.

"Take this—you damn rat!" Hurst's boot sent Lucas hurtling into the crowded alley. From somewhere a fist sent him stumbling back to his knees. He cowered there, whimpering.

"Good luck, Barry," Hurst sang out. "This copperhead's tame. Just blast that buzzard— Hey, fellow, look o-u-t!"

TOO LATE, Barry saw the glitter of the chunk of manganese the huge hand had brought up from the floor. It caught him in his bandaged side; an agony of pain that seemed to cave his ribs inward. Then Snyder lunged, savage triumph bellowing in his throat. Dazedly, Barry managed to side-step, dragging a foot in the path of the advancing avalanche of maddened bone and muscle.

Snyder, tripped, crashed head-on into a pile of manganese piled alongside the scales. Barry stood over him as he scrambled, dazed and confused, to his hands and knees.

"This is the pay-off, Snyder," he snarled. "With interest—from the Barrys! You can't sneak it over this time. Up, you rotten bully——"

Straight from the floor, head-first, Snyder sprang in a lunging butt. Don was aside, straight-arming him with a vicious shove that sent his face smashing to the floor plates. In a flash, Barry was astride the prostrate form. Cupping the shaggy head in his great hands, he pounded Snyder's face up and down. Snyder roared with pain. He gathered his knees under him, arching his back in prodigious effort, and heaved up in a movement that set him back on his haunches.

Barry dropped from Snyder's back, circled from the rear to the front like a flame, and pommeled the contorted face with rights and lefts. Snyder managed to cover his face with his ponderous arms and lumbered awkwardly to his feet.

"It's waiting, Snyder," Barry taunted. "Hospital bed—beside dad!"

A full second Barry waited, tensed, while the white-hot stream, glaring brightly in the feed door behind him, turned to a cherry-red as the steel finished and the slag poured out in its wake, overflowing the rim of the ladle on all sides. Blood and coke dust streaked Snyder's face in a gory make-up; hideous, fiendish, in the pitiless glare. His mighty chest heaved—once. Then, like a maddened, lunging wolf, he sprang, his long arms outstretched in desperate effort.

Barry swerved; a stray piece of manganese rolled under his feet; he went down in a heap. Snyder's plunging feet struck his crumpled body, tripped. He pitched head-first, straight toward the yawning feed door!

A cry of horror burst from a dozen throats. Instinctively, Barry's hands flashed up. His fingers closed in a grip of iron about an ankle. The next in-

stant his arms snapped out full length. They seemed to wrench loose from their sockets as the momentum of the plunging body jerked him halfway through the door.

Snyder's body fell short of the yawning maw of the ladle. Head and shoulders brushed the rim, bringing a shower of cherry-red slag crusts about the body as it bumped loosely down the sides to hang, a dead weight, in Barry's hands.

Bedlam reigned; shrill cries, the raucous jangle of the ladle-crane gong. Then some one rolled the furnace back.

Through the tumult of sound about him, Barry was suddenly conscious of a blistering wave of heat from the steel-filled ladle that pricked every pore with red-hot needles. Then a hand touched him and Hurst's voice came.

"Hold him, fellow. They'll pull that ladle in a jiffy."

Barry felt hands grasp his legs, felt them tighten in straining tugs. It was useless. Snyder's weight was too great. The huge form hung limp, motionless, in his hands. And farther down were the glare-lighted sides of the ladle stands—and hot slag! A broken neck, probably; certainly a frightful death in the embracing arms of that fiery bed if Barry's hold relaxed. Barry closed his pain-filled eyes to the scene.

Live coals of fire seemed to sit at the roots of every hair in his head. His neck burned. A curtain of heat draped its scorching folds about his hands and arms.

Then Barry felt a quiver of movement in his hands. His eyes opened. Snyder's shaggy head was twisted upward. His narrow-set eyes gazed dully about. Sudden terror leaped in their depths. He yelped, clapped his arms about his head.

"My head—neck!" he screamed. "This slag——"

"Shut up!" Barry snarled. "Fifty-fifty. That slag—this steel——"

Agonized shrieks came up from be-

low. "Help! Oh, Lord! Snake! Snake! He'll drop me——"

Barry tightened his grip doggedly. "Not a chance. You're my meat. You're going to answer—some questions——"

Snyder's body thrashed about in a fury of motion, then stilled suddenly. His wildly flailing arms crumpled; they flopped loosely, full length, below the great shaggy head. Snyder had fainted.

Barry felt a weight on his shoulders, heard the clang of steel against the upright table. Something cool and smooth slid down over his hands and arms, then his head. He twisted his head about. His eyes caught a shiny glint. A bitter smile twisted his lips. Shovels! Covering every inch of skin exposed to the heat.

THE ponderous ladle-crane hooks swung in with swift and delicate precision and lifted the ladle of steel from the stands and out into the pit. Men swarmed over the table railing and down its counterweight leg to the stands. A dozen hands grasped Snyder's dangling arms. Some one rolled the table down. Hurst flung himself flat on the table beside Barry. He wedged his arms and shoulders in the narrow feed door and caught Snyder's ankles.

"Let me have him," he grunted. "Get back; we'll handle him."

Barry weaved woozily to his feet. Misty figures swam past him in a dizzy blur, crouched strainingly over the feed door. Feet-first, Snyder's limp body was pulled back through the door. It flopped, loosely, on the steel plates.

Barry swayed back against the table apron. A bare instant his senses reeled. A million ants stung his arms and neck. Hand on the apron, he forced his swimming eyes to focus.

The crowd about Snyder stirred, opened its ranks. Snyder sat up suddenly. Some one helped him to his feet. The shaggy head rocked loosely—an in-

distinct blur before Barry's glazing eyes.

Barry growled, rocked forward drunkenly, his hammy fists extended. Snyder saw him. His eyes flared wide—stark panic in their depths.

"No! No! Hold him! For Heaven's sake——"

"One side," Barry growled weakly, nudging a misty figure. "It's a pay-off, damn him. I'm gonna—take 'im—apart!"

Snyder struggled wildly against the press of helpers about him. Terror ripped weird squeals from his thick throat.

"Wait, wait, I didn't do it—I swear it. Snake pulled that bolt——"

Barry's freckled fists found the gory face—once, twice. Snyder went down. His huge hands pawed frantically at his battered face.

"Yeah, yeah, I did it—pulled that bolt. Last year, too. I'll tell—gimme a chance. My Lord——"

THE NEXT MORNING Barry sat across the scarred desk from Superintendent King. His arms ended in two bandaged stumps. Adhesive strips held his head stiffly erect. King frowned heavily at the two accident reports before him.

"Damn me, if I understand it," he growled. "Hospitaled twice in two weeks. Yet you claim both are wins and——"

"With a shovel, super!"

King's mouth hardened. "Seems like I remembered a crack you made about fists——"

"Still goes, super. Figured it for yourself. Shovels make back walls—feed the spoon—load stock—if a man holds them! That's the rub. Man comes first. It takes good men—good fists—to handle open-hearth shovels—or other men. And I still claim I've got 'em, super—two damn good ones!"



*"Why, you rat!
You'd send your
own mother to the
chair!"*

THE TAP on the door sounded impatient, furtive. John Lane rose with the lithe grace of a panther. He surveyed the room. There was nothing lying about that shouldn't be. Then he saw his glasses. They were horn-rimmed affairs with plain glass for lenses. He wore them sometimes. They made him look like a sissy, which he wasn't.

He put the glasses on, opened the door with his left hand. His right hand appeared to be adjusting his tie, which feature brought it near his shoulder gun. It was a good idea, but the sight

of Ailene Norton in the hall made him feel a little foolish.

"What the devil," he said. "Get in here, quick!"

Making sure that she wasn't being followed, he closed and locked the door. He could tell by the light in her eyes, her half-parted lips, that she was excited. He liked to see her that way. It enhanced her already great beauty. And while he conceded her beauty as well as efficiency, he nevertheless resented her acting contrary to orders and seeking him out. He said so.

"I know, Jack, but I had to!" she cried. "It's come, Jack. I know it has. Gregory said he wanted to take me some place no other woman has ever been. It must be that place. It *must*!"

The Maze Master

Sand storms made to order! Death—

by CAPTAIN HAVELOCK-BAILIE



Lane took his glasses off, stared at her blankly. He knew he should have been thrilled, but he was scared to death.

"I don't like it," he said, flatly.

"But Jack, there's been six of us go down. Six of us. That alone should he—"

"I know," he said slowly. "I never forget that. And I know it's our job to bust Gregory wide open, but you're taking a lot on yourself. Too much.

This is no pink tea. Most gangsters are kids compared with Gregory. There must be some other means of finding his hide-out."

"Gregory's eating out of my hand," Ailene said. "He thinks I'm a grand lady, and he wants to get along."

"Be careful he doesn't eat a grand lady's hand off," Lane said. Then he fell silent—thinking of those six men who had died. Or had they died?

Sometimes bones were found on the desert—skeletons of men. More than six had been found. They might have been anybody. And anybody might have caused them to be there.

In any case, there was no evidence of murder, no evidence against Gregory. If a man were turned loose to wander on the desert, he died. It was impossible to prove anything else. Gregory came, went, disappeared. Now and again one of his gang fell into the hands of the law, but the smuggler baron never did. He owned the desert, the town, county and its officers. He was too big, too deadly. To give chase when he was carrying Chinese or other contraband, was to lose him in a sand storm of his own making.

Ailene must have had similar thoughts. She said: "We can't afford to pass up the chance. I'll go with him and keep my eyes open. Once we find how he disappears, the secret of his sand storms, he's through. Gregory is as vain as a child. He wants to parade his empire before me. I'll be gone only a few hours. I'm to drive out and meet him at the junction. I'll leave my car there. It's all right, Jack."

He watched her go and he didn't feel right. He felt like he wasn't playing a man's part. The fact that they both had the same rating, that they had succeeded on other assignments, appeased him not at all.

HIS EYES fell on a picture on the wall. It wasn't the questionable art that had attracted him. It was something else. The thing looked different. It took him a long minute to see that it was slightly askew. He strode across the room, drew the picture away from the wall and stood staring at a small dictaphone.

His room had been tapped and, ordinarily, that was O. K. by him, but Ailene had been there and they had said too much. Ailene was on her way to

meet Gregory. Gregory more or less controlled the town. He was suspicious of strangers. Therefore, Gregory had caused this room to be tapped and Ailene was keeping a rendezvous with death.

Lane was a big man, but he moved effortlessly. He grabbed his glasses and hat. The glasses were part of the thing he had started out to play—a house-to-house book peddler. It gave him an excuse for being in town. He didn't need an excuse now, he thought. He needed action. He barged through the door, down the hall. It was barely possible that he could catch Ailene before she met Gregory.

Ailene's car had gone from sight. Lane's own battered car was in a garage two blocks distant. He whirled out of the garage and cut left. Traffic regulations meant nothing. He ran signs and lights, thinned the traffic, and within five minutes had cleared the city limits. Then he leveled the accelerator.

The motor moaned; tires screamed. Lane glanced at the speedometer—eighty-seven. He fiddled with the spark and choke. There was no gain.

He saw Ailene's coupé when he was half a mile from the junction. It was parked by the gas station. He saw more than that. A full half mile farther on a big black car was speeding. That would be Gregory. Some one had called him at the junction service station and relayed the Federals' conversation. Else why the rush? If Gregory didn't know, he'd be taking his time.

The road twisted like a crippled snake. Lane took the curves the short way. He almost begged the car into greater speed. Yet he wasn't gaining. Gregory's rolling stock was too good.

Suddenly, Gregory's car zoomed from the highway to a road cut through the desert. Lane had expected that. He had trailed Gregory's men more than once. He jerked the car into a screeching, grinding turn. Rear tires spun,

sent out sprays of sand and gravel. The car struggled for balance, came to earth and went on.

The car in front cut speed, began to churn dust. Lane was forced to slow down. He could see almost nothing. The road became a trail, then nothing. Suddenly, there was a roar and the air became black. The magic sand storm had come.

Lane stopped the car, screwed up the windows. But sand came through, settling like a blanket. He coughed, choked. Dust hung like an impenetrable curtain.

He stepped from the car, rubbed his burning eyes and waited. It was the only thing he could do. Dust and sand drifted away in slow clouds. At last the desert became visible.

II.

FOR FORTY YEARS desert-trained men had tried to trail "Death Valley Scotty"—and failed. John Lane knew that, and he knew he was without desert training. He knew six of his comrades had gone down to a pile of whitened bones on this same desert. He knew chances of rescuing Ailene from Gregory—not to mention capturing the smuggler—were a million to one against him. But Lane knew something else: that he would keep trying until he succeeded or ceased to be.

The nature of his calling allowed for few mistakes, so he looked the rear trail over before going ahead. Building bridges after he crossed the rivers, John Lane called it. Therefore, he had to go back to town and wire headquarters full particulars. He didn't expect to get through, but he had to leave something for another man, or men, to work on.

Then he went back to where he had lost Gregory, or as near that point as possible. He went prepared to carry out the plan he had originally conceived,

and he didn't look like the book agent Inland City had come to know.

He lay stretched in the meager shade of a manzanita bush. He was tired, spent. Twice that day he had seen the man-made sand storm and had trudged on toward it. Now there was the drone of another motor. He raised himself, watched a car stop about five miles away. Then it was lost in another sand storm. Lane started walking, headed for that storm.

For almost two hours he walked through maddening heat and choking dust. Sand burned the soles of his shoes; heat came up as well as down.

Dust rose in the south. Another car was coming over the desert's face at a high rate of speed. One thing, he thought: he was getting a break of sorts—so much travel of the kind he needed on the day he needed it.

Lane tore a few more rents in his tattered clothes. He staggered a few steps, then fell. It was an act, but after eighteen hours it was not hard to do. He dragged himself up again, stood swaying, then started for the car. His feet followed each other rapidly, but with each step he bent nearer the ground. Then he fell hard. spurts of dust flew up around him. He lay so he could watch.

The car stopped a few yards distant. Two men jumped out. A slim, hard-faced fellow ran to Lane. The other, balloonlike, waddled slowly.

"Know him, Jackson?" he asked.

The slim man, whose mouth was filled with gold teeth that dazzled in the sun, turned Lane over. "Nope," he said, "never saw him before."

"Well, we can't leave him out here."

"The hell we can't," Jackson said.

The fat man pushed Lane's arm with the toe of his shoe. A metal handcuff slipped down and gleamed.

"So that's how it is," Jackson said. He raised Lane's other arm, saw the band of nicked steel. There was no

connecting link, and John Lane knew his wrists were red and raw.

Lane opened his eyes. He looked wildly at the two men, gave a croaking exclamation and struggled to his feet. He ran four, five steps, then crumbled.

"What do you think, Baby Face?" Jackson asked.

"I don't know. It's a long way to town."

"Yeah, maybe twenty years, according to those bracelets. It's a cinch he ain't goin' no place without help. Grab on."

"Baby Face" wheezed and groaned as they carried Lane to the car. They dumped him on the rear seat.

THE CAR moved forward at a fast clip. It rocked and swayed. At last it stopped and Jackson got out. Lane knew it was Jackson by the quick movements. The rear door opened and Jackson fumbled around. Lane saw him drag out a number of braided chains. Then he heard the rattle and snapping of chains, the sound of air escaping from tires. They were quitting the desert trail and the wheels were being tractored for unbroken sand.

The car lumbered and moved onward. At length it stopped and the horn blew a signal. Rusty hinges squeaked. The car rolled forward. Then Lane heard the roar of an airplane propeller. The car stopped again and he was lifted out, carried a few paces. He heard a radio; men moved about. He was dropped in a chair.

Some one said: "You guys'll catch plenty hell."

They put a wet towel around Lane's head. He opened his eyes slowly. The room was large, clublike. There was a long table covered with magazines, a lot of chairs. Serapes, *banderillas*, skins of animals adorned the walls. Several men sat about. They were ill at ease. Lane closed his eyes.

Some one shut the radio off. No one spoke or moved. Lane looked through

veiled lids and saw a man appear in a doorway across from him. Two men jumped to their feet. A Chinese looked through a rear doorway, then ducked from view and dishes began to rattle. The man across the room was tall, cadaverous.

He said: "Let's have it."

Jackson shuffled his feet, hesitated. "It's this way, chief," he said. "Baby Face and I found him on the desert. He was ready to croak. He'd been handcuffed. We brought him in."

The man gazed at Jackson with eyes so cold they might have been sightless. He had a straight-across slit of a mouth, a face that might have been chipped from granite, and he stood as stiff as a statue. When he spoke, his words carried just as much emotion.

"Come here, Jackson. And you, Baby Face."

Both men walked slowly up to him.

He sniffed at them. "Drinking again," he said. His left hand came up as swift as light. Only Lane saw it was not a hand. It was a steel hook. The hook raked viciously across Baby Face's round cheek, laying it open to the bone. Almost in the same move, it laid Jackson's face open.

Jackson jerked one hand to his face, the other to a hip pocket. The tall man ignored him. He lighted a cigarette, walked toward Lane. "It is remarkable," he said, "how long the human body can exist—without a brain."

He snapped the towel from Lane's head with the hook. He said: "I am Gregory." He said that like a child reading from a primer. His eyes were hard to meet. They no longer appeared cold. They glowed and dimmed, like coal fanned by the wind. "What do you want?" he asked.

John Lane made a croaking sound with his throat. It seemed the best thing to do.

Gregory turned to a short fellow.

"Singer," he said, "search this man good."

Lane was searched good. Even his shoes were removed and the heels and lining tested. A small automatic taped to the inside of his thigh was found.

"There should be a key to those cuffs," Gregory said. "However, it doesn't matter." The hook on his arm circled Lane's neck, pulled. "Get up, you!"

Lane staggered to his feet, stood weaving.

"Now that you are here, what are you going to do about it?" Gregory asked.

"I don't understand," Lane croaked.

"Well, I understand," Gregory said. "Your beard is right; possibly three days. Your eyes are right; possibly pepper. You would like me to believe you have escaped from the law. I will believe that, if you tell me where you escaped from."

He called something in Chinese. The Chinaman popped from a rear door. He carried a tray with whisky, glasses and a siphon.

Gregory looked at Lane almost friendly—like a cannibal with a gastronomic interest in a captive missionary. "If you will forget what little histrionic ability you may think you have," he said, "we will have a drink, then supper."

III.

LANE KNEW Gregory wasn't grand-standing. The torn cheeks of Baby Face and Jackson, the sharp hook that glittered through dried blood, Lane's six comrades who had turned to white bones on the desert, told him that the man was a monster whose only pleasure was writing his name in blood.

Fifteen hard-eyed men sat down to eat. And John Lane was one of them.

Scarcely a dozen bites had been taken when Gregory called to the Chinaman: "Lee," he said, "did you feed the bird?"

The Chinaman grumbled, "Allee time, you ask that. She no good—no sling—no eat. Allee time you ask——"

"Lee, carry her some food!" Gregory snapped.

The Chinaman shrugged, started filling a plate. Lane had no doubt that the "bird" was his undercover associate, Ailene Norton. He sat tense, hoping something more would be said. But nothing was—then.

The Chinaman padded from the room. The men ate silently, watching Gregory and Lane. There was no noise save the soft clatter of knives and forks. Then, suddenly, there was a crash of dishes, a yell, the scurry of feet, and the Chinaman burst into the dining room. Directly behind him was Ailene Norton, armed with a broom handle.

"She crazy! No sling, no eat. She crazy!" Lee screamed wildly.

Ailene stopped in the doorway. She let the stick fall, then smiled at the room. "I don't like him," she stated simply, "and he doesn't like me. Anyway, if I am to be held here for the rest of my life, I don't choose to spend all my time in solitude."

Gregory rose from his chair, bowed. "Then perhaps you will dine with me and my—er—jolly fellows. I believe you once made the remark that I was eating from your hand. I enjoyed it. Come, sit on my left and see how you like eating from this." He held the blood-crusted hook toward her in sardonic invitation.

Lane watched her closely. If she drew back or shuddered, he failed to observe it. He felt she could play her part, whatever it was.

She sat in a chair the Chinaman brought—sat down at Gregory's left. Then she stared at the murderous collection of fugitives. She nodded at Lane, asking Gregory, "A new recruit?"

"A new recruit for the legion of the dead, my dear," he said. "It's barely possible you have met the gentleman."

Jackson's nature was apparently untamed. He felt his torn face, stared at Ailene, then at Gregory. "It strikes me," he said, "that you tear hell out of a man for doing something when you yourself have pulled a boner twice as dumb—bringing that dame out here."

"There are several differences, my ugly friend," Gregory said smoothly. "In the first place, such thinking as is done for this aggregation, I will do. I picked you up and gave you two dollars to rub together. Immediately, you decide you are pretty good. You are wrong. *I am pretty good.*

"Then, there is the matter of our associated actions. This young lady had an idea I was eating out of her hand, when all I wanted was to get her out here. She never had a chance to go back. This man"—he nodded at Lane—"caused you to eat out of his hand. He is some sort of a Federal agent who wanted to be brought here, and you obliged. I hope you see the difference."

AN ELECTRIC SILENCE filled the room. Lane sat tensed. Something was bound to happen. He wished he knew what.

Jackson jumped to his feet. "Why, you lousy rat!" he snarled. "You'd send your own mother to the chair!"

At first, Lane thought Jackson was talking to Gregory. Too late, he saw his mistake. Jackson's smashing fist caught him unawares. He went over, chair and all. He leaped up, dodged another blow and closed in. There was a mad scramble around the table.

Gregory's voice crackled. "A private fight, boys. The starters will finish—or one of them will."

Jackson gave a savage twist, broke away. He jumped back; his right hand streaked for his pocket and Lane was looking down the barrel of a gun. Jackson hesitated—too long.

Lane knew there really was no sense in fighting. Winning this fight would

net him nothing. But he fought anyway. He dodged and leaped. His fingers closed on Jackson's wrist, twisted it upward. Jackson aimed a terrific kick at his stomach. Lane whirled, grabbed the swinging leg, and both men fell to the floor. Jackson's left kept a steady pounding at Lane's face and neck. There was no way to ward the blows off. He had to have that gun.

A foot appeared from nowhere. The gun went spinning across the room. Lane released Jackson's wrist. He drew back his right, crashed it against the man's jaw. Jackson possumed, for, as Lane rose to his feet, he rolled over, sprang up and grabbed a chair. Lane ducked just as the chair whistled over his head. It crashed against the wall. Jackson made a bee line for his gun—got it.

"That will be all from you, Jackson!" Gregory snapped.

"Yeah?" Jackson snarled. "And I've had all I want from you. You think I'm a trained seal?"

The tableau was hypnotic. Lane watched, because he thought he was cheating death. He was seeing something he should not see, because he should be dead. He couldn't understand why he was not, what had turned Jackson's wrath from him to Gregory.

Jackson's gun pointed at Gregory's heart. Gregory advanced, slowly, steadily. His eyes never left Jackson's face, and the pupils were pin points, filled with little dancing flames, with the greed to kill. Gregory wasn't grandstanding. He just didn't know anything about fear.

The room was tied up. The men were bunched. Scarcely aware of it, Lane found himself pressed between "Singer" and the girl. He was listening for the roar of that gun, watching for Gregory to crumble. The gun wavered.

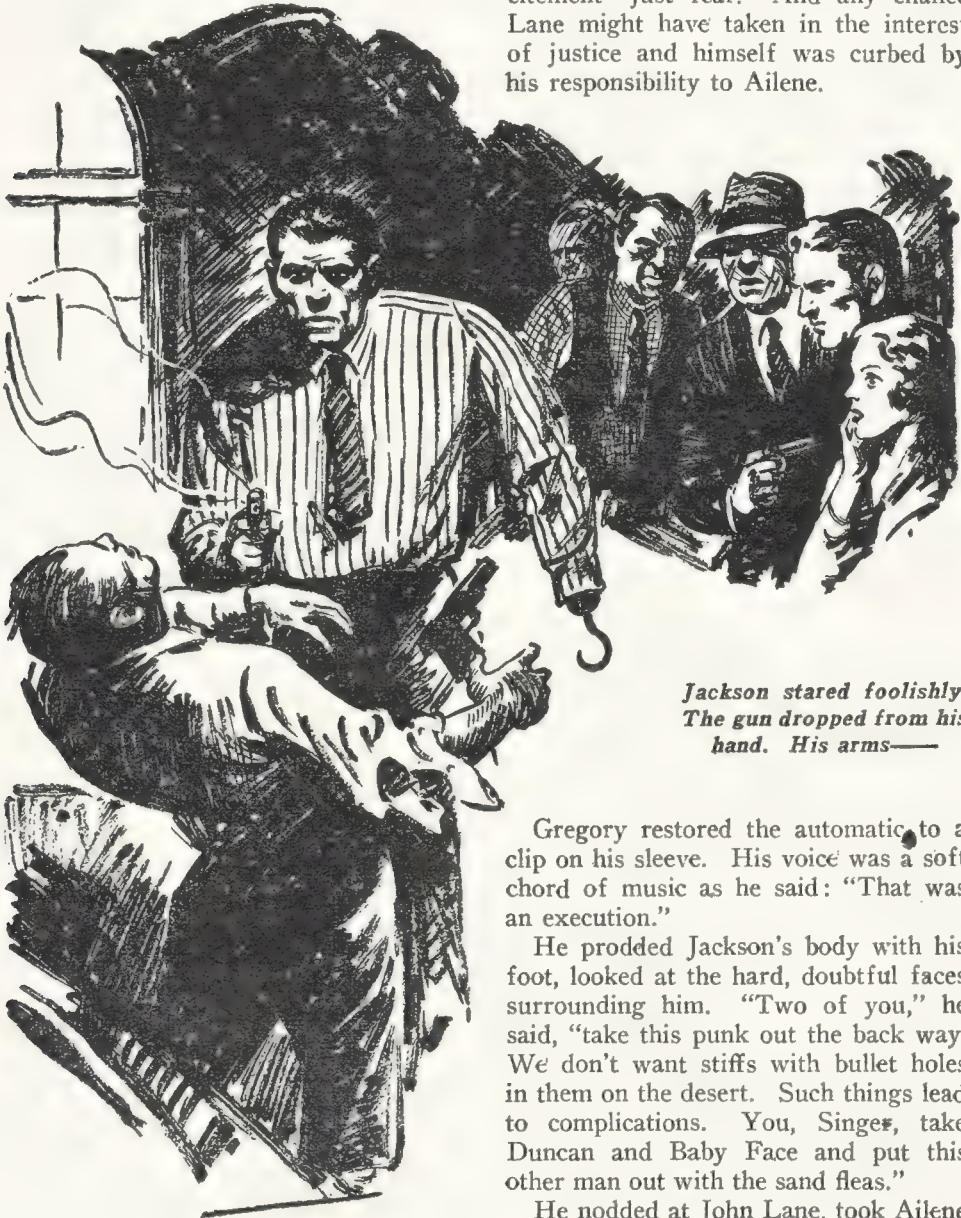
Gregory walked straight ahead. He kicked a chair out of his path. The chair skidded and Jackson's eyes shifted

a little. Gregory picked at his sleeve with his right hand. Then there was another gun, and it roared.

Jackson stared foolishly. The gun dropped from his hand. His arms fell. His knees buckled and he toppled over as a gush of blood spilled gold teeth in front of him.

Lane felt fingers bite into his arm. He turned and saw Ailene's blanched face. He looked quickly away.

A little hope had died within him. He had vaguely hoped that Jackson would win. In that eventuality, he might have had some chance in the excitement sure to follow. But now there was no excitement—just fear. And any chance Lane might have taken in the interest of justice and himself was curbed by his responsibility to Ailene.



*Jackson stared foolishly.
The gun dropped from his
hand. His arms—*

Gregory restored the automatic to a clip on his sleeve. His voice was a soft chord of music as he said: "That was an execution."

He prodded Jackson's body with his foot, looked at the hard, doubtful faces surrounding him. "Two of you," he said, "take this punk out the back way. We don't want stiffs with bullet holes in them on the desert. Such things lead to complications. You, Singe, take Duncan and Baby Face and put this other man out with the sand fleas."

He nodded at John Lane, took Ailene

by the arm and led her from the room. He did not look back.

IV.

JOHN LANE was going for a ride—the most horrible ride possible to imagine. He was going to be turned loose on the desert, to wander over the blistering sand; his system would scream for water; he would see things that did not exist; he would rave; his tongue would thicken and, at last, he would collapse and be meat for the buzzards.

He knew that, and he wondered why he didn't do something about it. He wondered, as he often had wondered, why any man permits himself to be "taken for a ride" when he knows he is going to die anyway. Then he knew the answer. It is because hope dies only with death. And Lane saw two rays of hope. They were not very bright, but they were there. He saw hope in the hopelessness on Baby Face's deflated face; and words that no one else could hear were ringing in his ears: "Out the back way! Out the back way!"

Gregory had ordered Jackson's body taken out the back way. That meant there were two entrances to his hide-out.

It was a starry night, almost as light as day. Lane was able to study the layout on the way to the car. It was a miniature canyon, cliff-girded and stretching about two miles east and west. It seemed to be a natural sink, for there was no visible means of egress. Lane knew there must be, but he could see only that the place was surrounded on four sides.

They passed a number of buildings. One, a hangar, holding a small plane. There was a long garage. All buildings were flat-topped, each camouflaged with piles of sandstone on the roof.

Lane edged closer to Baby Face. Lane said, "Not so good, this sort of a

ride. Will they put a bullet in us before they leave us. If they don't——"

Baby Face stared at him, a scared man. Lane was scared, too, but he wanted to impress on Baby Face that while Gregory hadn't said so in so many words, the fat man was also headed for the last round-up.

Singer took the wheel, ordered Lane to sit with him. Baby Face and Duncan got in the rear. A blindfold was snapped across Lane's eyes. Singer said, "A house rule, sucker."

There was no further talking. The car rolled away, stopped once and Lane heard a squeaking hinge. Then the car rolled on again.

Without asking, Lane drew the blindfold from his face. He was surrounded by sand that gleamed in reflected starlight. He looked at Singer. "I can understand a man taking an enemy for a ride, but turning the trick on a pal must be tough. Or doesn't it bother you?"

The man Duncan said: "He's nuts, Baby Face."

"Spoken like a true pal," Lane said. "I get it. Let the fat boy go out dumb but happy. I don't suppose there's much of a law against it. On the other hand, our Uncle Sam gets sore when his boys are treated rough."

"In a book, he does," Singer said. "You make an even seven, pal. And your Uncle Sam hasn't got very sore yet. Now shut the mouth or it gets a pop on the jaw."

"Like this?" Lane said, and let go with all he had. His right connected with Singer's jaw and his left caught Singer's ribs.

Lane had nothing more to fear from Singer. He jerked around and saw Baby Face sink over Duncan like a falling balloon. There was a muffled explosion. Baby Face slumped gaspingly. Lane leaped over the seat. His toe caught Duncan on the point of the jaw, just as he crawled from under the

‘dying Baby Face. The fat man was going out fast. He gasped, gurgled—and that was all.

LANE snapped the ignition off, yanked Singer’s body over the back rest. He found a roll of mechanic’s tape and a coil of wire under the front seat. When he finished taping and wiring the two men he knew nothing short of a miracle, or the assistance of another man, could free them. They would get no help this night, and miracles, he figured, did not happen in pairs.

One miracle had happened. He was alive and free. But he felt no victory, nor would he, so long as Ailene was in Gregory’s power. He knew there would be no tracks leading back to the hide-out. Shortly after leaving the canyon he had heard the roar which always preceded the sand storm. He looked down the trail, headed back to town.

Three days before, he had left his car in a thick clump of chaparral near the junction. It was still there. He backed it out and drove the other car in. He dragged the dead Baby Face out, for the comfort of his prisoners.

At the service station he called the distant chief of the Southern District and related what had happened. He learned that three operators were on their way to join him.

“Have them take the desert,” he directed, and hung up.

In the turtleback of his car was everything he might need. He headed straight for the beach, drove several miles northward and came to a pier with crumbled railings and rotted underpinnings. East were the sand hills, the headquarters of Gregory, he felt certain. Gregory had not built the pier, of course, but if he worked from the coast he would avail himself of the deep water facilities it offered. The pier was at least fifty years old.

Prowling around, Lane came upon an old narrow-gauge track. He turned his

flashlight on it. It was flaked with heavy rust. Nevertheless, he followed the tracks.

At the foot of the nearest hill he found a flat car, rust-covered, weather-worn. He flashed the light on the wheels, and drew his breath in with a little sucking sound. Grease showed on the axles. He knelt and rubbed his hands over a wheel, against a rail. They came away clean. This track, this car was actively in service. There was no rust. What appeared to be rust was some sort of paint.

“Mr. Gregory,” Lane murmured, “you’re a smart man. I’ll concede you that.”

Lane knew the pier and track had been put in by some mining company years ago. The track would not end a few feet from the mountainside. He gazed hopefully at the sandstone cliff. It didn’t seem possible that the mouth of a tunnel could be close to him, yet it had to be.

THERE WAS a great rock, taller than a man and about five feet wide. Apparently it was embedded in the face of the cliff. It was scratchy, felt light to the touch. Lane saw it was a porous stone of volcanic formation.

On one side of the stone the cliff protruded; on the other it was sheer. Lane caught hold of the stone on the protruding side. He pulled. It opened easily, like a door. A few stones fell from above, then all was quiet. Lane stared into the black mouth of a tunnel.

“Yes, sir, Mr. Gregory, you’re a smart man,” he said.

It took him two hours to get to the beach and back with all the things he needed. He entered the tunnel, flashed a light. The tunnel was well braced. Rails were stacked along the wall. The floor was packed hard as pavement.

Flashing the light at intervals, Lane made his way upward. He came to a large room, where many bolts of silk

were piled. Other tunnels branched off from both sides. Presently his path was blocked by a stiff canvas curtain. Near by lay all that was left of Jackson.

Lane pocketed his light, drew the curtain back. Gregory's canyon was spread out before him. The full moon and stars showed shadowy buildings, a dry river bed disappearing beneath sandstone hills.

Lane carried a large stone inside the tunnel, past the smuggled merchandise, and placed it on the floor. He took three sticks of dynamite from a pocket, prepared one with fuse and cap, tied them together and hid them under the stone. The fuse barely showed next to the wall.

He went outside. Keeping to the shadows, he slipped quietly across the canyon. A hundred yards before reaching the first building, he secreted a sub-machine gun. He was burning his bridges before he came to them.

He loosened the revolver in his trouser band, hurried to the far end of the canyon. He stopped, studied the superstructure of a false wall. The phenomenon of the disappearing cars lay before him. Originally, the entrance to the small canyon, Gregory had boxed it up and cut a doorway.

Lane opened the creaking door, stepped into the desert. The outer wall was covered with canvas, painted with glue, then sprinkled with many-colored sand while still wet. In appearance, it was not unlike the joining hills.

Inside the wall was the machine whose work Lane had seen and felt: an airplane motor, with propellers on three sides, mounted on a caterpillar tractor. What Hollywood calls a wind-maker. Under cover of the first sand storm caused by special exhaust pipes, this machine evidently stole out, followed in the wake of the car and obliterated all tracks as well as completely blinding any follower.

"Good," Lane murmured. "Plenty

good. Now to light a flare and get back to the other end."

He started for the outside again, and the whole world seemed to fall upon his head.

V.

LANE didn't come up fighting. He came out of blackness into sickness. He was in the main room of the headquarters building. He was sick and dizzy. His entire body ached. But his greatest pain was mental. He cursed himself for being a lunkhead.

"Would you like something—a drink, perhaps?"

The question interrupted Lane's self-condemnation. He opened his eyes, a painful operation. Gregory was standing in front of him.

"You are what the British call a bitter-ender," Gregory said.

"In plain United States, a damned fool," Lane replied.

The Chinaman entered with a tray of food and a bottle of whisky. He returned to the kitchen.

Gregory walked to another door, stopped. "I am not going to ask you what happened," he said. "I have a fair idea. That is part of the game we both play. As soon as I have eaten, I shall personally take you out on the desert—a long way out. Doubtless you will die unpleasantly."

"It's rather dangerous to bump off Federal men," Lane said.

Gregory shrugged. "Bones picked by buzzards look alike," he said, and stalked out.

Lane glanced over his shoulder to see if he was being guarded. He was. A man sat on a chair tilted against the wall. He was a scar-faced man with smoky eyes. He sat with arms folded, a big gun buckled on his hip.

Lane drank two cups of coffee, spiked with whisky. That made him feel better. A clean cup stood near the edge of a small table, and the table was near

the guard. Lane could have reached for it, but the one or two steps brought him closer to the man. He filled the cup with whisky, took a small sip.

"You must be pretty dry," the guard said.

"A condemned man should be allowed to go out drunk—or should he?" Lane asked.

"I'm not good at answers," his guard growled.

Lane took another sip; then, with a quick sweep of his arm, he dashed the fiery liquor straight into the man's eyes.

The guard roared, covered his eyes with his hands. Lane put all his weight behind a straight left to the face. Before the echo of the blow died out, Lane had the man's gun. He went through the window, sash, glass and all. He darted around the house, past the garage and hangar, on toward the machine gun. A dozen shots followed him, but the false light of dawn, combined with men not quite awake, made the shots go wild.

Lane dropped behind the boulder, grabbed the machine gun. Half the gang were running toward him. He aimed slowly, carefully, then fired six shots. Two men fell. The others stopped cold, dashed for the cover of the buildings.

Lane smiled grimly. He had a fighting chance—a chance that had come back. He leaped to his feet, shoved the guard's revolver inside his shirt and ran for the mouth of the tunnel. There was going to be just one way out.

Shots followed him. They sang by his ears with a whining noise. But he made it to the tunnel. He stopped by the hidden dynamite, held a match to the fuse. It started to sputter. Then he ran back into the canyon.

THE MEN were almost upon him, but the sight of the sub-machine gun sent them scurrying for cover. Too, they were surprised to see him return.

Lane dodged around, worked his way around the canyon to the point where the river bed entered the north side. He drew a lot of revolver fire. Gregory's men thought he was bottled in the canyon. He was. And so were they.

The dynamite exploded in the tunnel. The gang turned in surprise. Lane took the chance, slipped from cover and raced for the point on the north side he had been trying to reach. A single shot rang out from the cluster of buildings. It struck a rock not three inches from Lane's face.

"Rifle!" he thought, and ducked behind a husky boulder. He looked around the side. Gregory was walking calmly toward him, a rifle swung over his arm.

Lane raised the machine gun, fired and missed. Gregory came slowly on. Then a heavy car backed from the garage and started for the front of the canyon. The blowing up of the tunnel must have decided some of the men to go while the going was good. Lane threw three shots at the car, then watched Gregory raise his rifle and start firing, coolly, deliberately, at the deserters.

The car went out of control, careened and crashed into the sand hills beside the superstructure. It ran its full length in a perpendicular course, fell back and burst into flames. An unearthly scream, then nothing.

The wood and canvas of the false front caught fire. Flames roared high. A group of men started for the flaming car. Gregory hailed them. "Let it go!" he yelled. "To hell with the fire. Go to the house and get some rifles."

His voice shrilled on the still air. The men were in a bunch. Gregory noticed it just as Lane did. "String out!" Gregory cried, too late.

Lane aimed the machine gun just above their knees and swung from left to right with the trigger back. Men fell like tenpins. One escaped the

leaden spray. He dashed for the house. A sharp *spang* rang out and a spurt of dust kicked up at his feet. He stopped, then started on. Another shot rang out from the house. The man threw his hands high and fell.

"Good for Ailene," Lane muttered, then looked for Gregory.

The smuggler baron was at the hangar. An instant and the nose of the plane poked out, then the entire plane. The Federal man cursed. He had meant to disable that plane.

Gregory kicked the prop over, jumped into the open cockpit and raced the motor. The plane rolled down the floor of the canyon; made the quickest take-off Lane had ever seen. It gained altitude, turned and zoomed across the dry river bed. It was crazy flying.

Lane had started after Gregory. Then he realized what was going to happen. He rolled under a projecting ledge just as a hail of bullets descended. Gregory had a gun in his plane. He couldn't see how to get Lane out of the rocks, so he got above him.

THE PLANE zoomed up. Lane peppered its belly without success. The plane zipped back across the canyon and Lane dived under the ledge. Gregory had a good eye. Bullets rained on the rock with a sound like a riveting machine.

The bullets stopped. Lane hopped out with machine gun ready. But Gregory had fooled him. He had made a quick circle and coasted back with cut motor. A bullet sent Lane's gun flying from numbed fingers. Another plowed through his shoulder. He fell solidly to the ground, cold.

Not many seconds had passed when he opened his eyes and struggled up. He saw the plane sitting near the hangar. Gregory came from the house, carrying the unconscious form of Ailene. Gregory dropped her into the

rear cockpit of the plane, then walked to the front and kicked the prop.

The tail of the plane was toward Lane. The motor roared. Gregory climbed slowly into the front cockpit. The plane ambled down the canyon floor.

Lane was running. The revolver in his shirt jiggled downward and clattered to the ground. His wounded shoulder screamed at him to stop. He stumbled, all but fell, staggered onward.

He passed the tail of the plane. It rolled faster. Lane hurled himself forward, grabbed a strut and the wind-shield brace of the rear cockpit. The plane bumped, lifted, settled, then took off with a roar and a swish that slapped Lane against the body like the crack of a whip. The strain and agony of his shoulder was so great, he started to release his grip. He saw the canyon floor sweeping away from him. He clutched harder.

Wind whistled through the wings and struts, tore at his ragged clothes. It was needle-sharp and grew worse with increasing speed. The body of the plane was slick as glass. Lane couldn't hang on much longer, and he knew it.

Gregory banked sharply, headed south. At the peak of the bank the plane seemed to suspend itself just an instant. Lane took advantage of it. His right elbow hooked over the back of the cockpit. Slowly, painfully, he dragged himself inside.

Ailene lay on the cockpit floor. Gregory turned, grinned sardonically. He slashed back with his hooked arm. Lane dodged weakly, caught the arm with both hands. The hook tore cruelly through his forearm. The plane lurched, threw him to the floor.

He rose, caught the back of Gregory's shirt collar, pulled hard. It must have caused Gregory to yank the stick. The plane hurled upward, turned in a dizzy loop. Lane was thrown back against the cockpit seat. He righted

himself, stared foolishly at the shirt collar in his hand.

The plane rolled, started into a spin. Lane wanted those controls. He meant to have them. He crawled forward, smashed at Gregory. The smuggler baron kicked the rudder bar, yanked the stick and sent the plane almost straight up in a dizzy spiral. Then, as cool as if he had been in a club chair, he rose, raised his hooked arm and crashed the hook against Lane's temple.

VI.

JOHN LANE regained consciousness with the salty tang of his own blood in his mouth. Lying across the unconscious body of Ailene Norton, he fought against the nauseating weakness with all the power of an implacable will.

Suddenly the plane zoomed downward. The motor was cut. They were making a landing. Lane felt the plane strike the earth, bounce, then skim along and stop. He heard Gregory moving around, climbing out. He lay perfectly still, trying to draw upon any reserve strength that might be his.

The hook in Gregory's arm came over the cowl and fastened into Lane's belt. Lane felt himself dragged from the cockpit like a sack of meal. The heat of the desert sand rushed in on him. He knew he was to be left on the desert, as Gregory had promised.

Lane was swung clear of the plane. He opened his eyes but could not see Gregory. Then he realized that his head was over Gregory's shoulder. He looked down. There was a bulge in Gregory's pocket. Many things beside a gun could cause that, but Lane missed no chances. He let his arms dangle; his fingers slid hungrily into the pocket.

Gregory got the idea—too late. Lane's hand closed around the gun. Gregory tried to pull himself free. Lane's other arm got a strangle hold.

Suddenly he felt Gregory's hook sinking into his side. He yanked with all his strength, licked out, and the two men fell to the sand. They rolled over and over. Time and again the hook laid John Lane's flesh open.

The gun came free of Gregory's pocket. His right hand snaked out, grabbed Lane's wrist. The hook was coming close again. Lane caught the leather-incased arm just above that deadly weapon.

Their faces were close together. Hot mouths were open. They rolled over, sweat dripping from one to the other.

Gregory's hand started working up from Lane's wrist to the trigger finger. If he could control that finger, it would be anybody's gun. Lane tried to stretch his arm. A sharp yank bent his elbow. He couldn't see the gun, and he vaguely wondered who it was pointed at. He tried to detect its pressure against his body. It could have been touching him in a hundred places—places of sand-filled, open wounds.

Gregory's hand was near the trigger finger. The men rolled, tumbled, kicked. Gregory gained top position, rolled to the right. Lane brought his knee up, lurched sideways. The gun roared.

Gregory toppled into the sand. He lay motionless. The gun had kicked from Lane's hand. He forgot about it, struggled to his knees. He thought Gregory was dead.

THE smuggler baron's eyes opened. He smiled wryly. "A slight mistake," he said weakly. "Now we will both find out how it is to die in the desert—unless you can pilot a plane."

"I can't," Lane admitted. "I thought I could land it a while back. Maybe I couldn't have." He stared at Gregory a moment longer. "But you're going to pilot us out of here."

"And if I don't?"

"I'll put a bullet through your head."

"Thank you," Gregory said. "And I advise you to save one for yourself."

Lane sat on his knees and gazed at Gregory, completely baffled. Was he, after all that had happened, to die on the desert anyway? Was Ailene—

He looked around quickly, the action bringing to him a full realization of his torn and battered condition. Ailene was standing in the cockpit of the plane. Her face showed no more expression than that of a sleepwalker. Suddenly she stepped out into space, fell headlong. She arose, stared about blankly, staggered a half dozen steps and collapsed.

"What about her?" Lane asked.

"She was having me eat out of her hand," Gregory said. "Her fate concerns me not at all."

Lane stared through the heat waves of the rolling sand. Distantly, five miles or fifty, a thin spiral of smoke rose skyward. That had to be Gregory's burning maze. It could mean that Lane's fellow officers were that close. Certainly they would have heard the shooting, or at least they now saw the fire.

The revolver lay some four feet away. Lane got within an inch of it when Gregory grabbed his arm and pulled back. Lane fell, and Gregory started crawling over him. His knee slid between Lane's legs and Lane clamped down weakly. They lay that way a long time; Gregory unable to go on and Lane lacking the strength to disentangle himself.

Gregory tried again. He would get the gun. He would reach the plane—safety. Lane thought of his handcuffs. He slipped them from the clip at his belt, snapped one on Gregory's wrist, the other on his own. He brought his knee up in Gregory's stomach. Gregory slumped and Lane got the gun.

Judging Ailene to be a safe distance from the plane, Lane raised himself on an elbow, pumped shots at the gas tank. The tank exploded, burst into flames. He lay back and watched the smoke.

Gregory said: "You damned fool!" and raked out with his hook. Lane struck weakly with the empty revolver. Warm, fresh blood coursed down his face. The shock of the gun striking Gregory sent a blast of lightning up his arm. He dropped like a suit of old clothes, dimly wondering if Hell was any hotter than the desert.

JOHN LANE knew he was riding in something and he knew some one was carefully holding him. He opened his eyes, saw that the one was an automobile and the other was Ailene Norton. He recognized the man at the wheel as a brother agent.

He looked at Ailene again. She was slightly disheveled, a little wan, but she looked good to him. She said: "They saw the smoke. Everything's all right."

"Gregory?" he asked weakly.

"He'll live to swing, or burn, or whatever it is they will do to him," she said. "Everything's all right."

Lane lay back. While the heat of the desert bored in on him, he thought how many pains he had and what a whale of a scrap it had been. Then he thought about Ailene and about the possibilities of a vacation for them both. Go to Mount Rainier, for instance, and play in the snow. Plenty of snow.

Ailene said: "The boys brought orders from the chief regarding another case, if we have this one cleaned up. It's a case something like this—up in the Mohave Desert."

There was only one thing for John Lane to do, and he did it. For the fifth time that day he passed out.

Sweetness and Fight

A new Mullaly story

by Samuel Taylor

MULLALY opened his cabin door at the knock to see the fur-clad figure of big "Denver" Greer framed in the opening. Mullaly greeted him, and swung the door wide. But Denver Greer did not step inside immediately. He stood there strangely stiff and wooden, saying nothing, staring blankly, while the cold arctic air from outside swirled into the cabin in frosty billows. There came the sound of heavy, wheezing breathing.

"Come in," said Mullaly, a bit sharply.

Then came a voice, strained and desperate—a voice that came even though Denver Greer's stiff lips did not part nor twitch a muscle: "Mike, help me. Help me, Mike."

Then the big figure of Denver Greer began moving, stiffly like a pole. Mullaly grabbed the man by the arm, and only then, feeling the rigid muscles beneath the fur parka, did he realize what the frost-rimmed countenance should have told him in an instant.

Denver Greer was stone dead, and his body was frozen into a block of ice. Mullaly tensed like a panther; no man is immune from the supernatural, least of all he who lives up in the great wastes where many things are beyond explanation. Then the event became only surprising and tragic, not ghostly, as a head poked from behind the dead body. It was the wizened countenance of little "Swan" Kintgen, the dead man's partner, who had been toting him. Mullaly helped lay the frozen one out on the bunk, then looked questioningly at Kintgen.

Swan Kintgen was not five feet tall, and he had packed a hundred and ninety-odd pound weight for better than three miles across the snow-covered hills. He stood there, legs braced, while his narrow lungs dragged in great gulps of air.

Finally he raised blue eyes to meet Mullaly's gaze, and said: "Belmessiere."

"What happened?"

A shrug. "Ay do not know," came the thick accent. "From the traps I come—and cabin burned, outfit gone, pardner——" He shrugged at the frozen figure on the bunk, and said again that name which seemed to explain everything: "Belmessiere."

Mullaly took his parka from a peg on the wall and slipped it on. "Come on, Swan Kintgen. We'll settle this racket right now, to-day."

"Gun?" asked Kintgen as Mullaly strode for the door. "Help?"

Mullaly flexed his big fists. "These are my guns—an' also my help. Comin'?"

The shriveled man nodded. "Ay come."

BELMESSIERE and "Wolverine" were seated at a corner table in "Caribou Johnnie's" trading post, waiting for Mullaly, knowing he would come. The rest of the gang were at the bar having some drinks.

Belmessiere said: "You've got his knife, yes? All right, he'll come in and pick a fight, and then a knife will flash—his knife—and then he will be killed. Self-defense."

The massive Wolverine nodded. He gave a hitch of his right arm and out of his fur-parka sleeve came the carved whalebone hilt of the knife he had stolen from Mullaly. Wolverine was a giant of a man, towering close to seven feet, and his great girth gave proportion to his build. With his spiny beard, his hands and wrists covered with matted black hair almost as heavy as the fur of his skin parka and pants, Wolverine looked like some great bear slumped over the table.

"But what if he don't come?"

"He will. Denver Greer's place is only a little ways from his cabin. Swan Kintgen will tell him, and Mullaly will come roaring. And he's the one to get out of the way, yes. Yes, he's the only one to fear."

"A shot from ambush——"

Belmessiere shook his head. There was wolflike cunning in those lean features. "We want to show force, understand? We want the trappers hereabouts to know it's no use fighting us. If even the great Mullaly gets killed bucking us—— That girl in the back room——" he said, abruptly changing the subject. "I like her looks, so work fast so's there won't be too much racket to wake her up. Who is she?"

Wolverine's hulking shoulders shrugged. "Dunno. She comes in with the mail sledge, and asks fer Mullaly. Decides to stay over and go to his cabin in the mornin'."

"Sweetheart," surmised Belmessiere. "That's another reason for quick work. We want Mullaly out of the road for more reasons than one. That girl's sweet."

MULLALY stormed into the trading post and went right up to Belmessiere—that is, as close as he could get to Belmessiere, for the huge Wolverine was in the way, guarding the boss.

"I come to settle for the killin' of Den-

ver Greer," said Mullaly. "You fixed him, Belmessiere, and I'll fix you."

"You're makin' a big statement, yes?" Belmessiere sneered.

"At least a true one," Mullaly admitted. "You know what I mean. But you can't git away with that sort of stuff up here beyond the arctic circle. Naw, you're in the wrong country for rackets. You can't organize the trappers up here."

"They're organized," contradicted the gang leader. "For higher fur prices, coöperative buying——"

Mullaly broke in with a snort. "Sure—and a cut to your gang. Denver Greer wouldn't come in, him and Swan Kintgen, and so you killed Denver, burned the cabin——"

"You can't call me a killer twice!"

With a sweep of his arm Mullaly ripped his parka over his head and stood there in this rabbit-fur undershirt. Belmessiere had glided back a couple of paces, and the huge Wolverine came closer, hunched like a bear, with his hairy right fist clutching the hilt of Mullaly's stolen knife, the blade of which still was up in the loose fur sleeve.

The other seven members of the gang took up strategic positions, hands inside parkas on the butts of their revolvers. One sidled up to Swan Kintgen and rammed something in the little man's ribs, muttering a warning against joining the fight. Another gave a clipped order and Caribou Johnnie, the post keeper, very carefully spread his hands flat atop the counter.

Mullaly had walked into the trap, probably because he had utter contempt for schemes and plots, and because he had supreme confidence in his own prowess. Not a boasting man, was Mullaly, nor one to pick a quarrel, but he was your fighter who took to bodily conflict with the passionate zeal that men in softer climes embrace football, tennis or golf. Among your Northmen, fighting isn't something born entirely of hate.

*"I come to settle for the
killin' of Denver Greer."*



It is a great deal a matter of red-blooded competition—elemental as life itself—and for that very reason the greatest of all sports. And in it Mullaly excelled.

Mullaly was the first to attack. Like a dog snapping at a bear he lunged in, crashed a mighty blow through the spiny whiskers to the simian jaw, whaled his other fist into the midriff, and then he was away before the big man could get his bulk in action.

With a roar that shook the rafters Wolverine howled into a counterattack with big arms spread like those of a bear. Mullaly had put all his muscle behind his two blows, but the hulking Wolverine seemed not even dazed. This would be no quick fight. You couldn't mow this behemoth down with a shock punch. It would be bruising, battering—or so Mullaly must have figured, for he didn't know of the knife hilt grasped in the hairy right fist, of the keen blade ready to flip out of the sleeve—

Wolverine's rush was carrying Mullaly back into a corner. The Northerner had no desire to get entangled in those tremendous arms. He was dancing away, throwing sledge hammer blows at the mountain of flesh, putting all his power into ramming knuckles that seemed to affect the big man not at all. Then just as it seemed that he was trapped in the corner, with those big arms already closing around him, Mullaly braced a mukluk on the wall behind him and sprang forward suddenly, whirling as he did so, grasping Wolverine's massive wrist with both hands and putting on the pressure.

It was just an ordinary wrist lock, common to all wrestlers, but Wolverine probably never in his life had encountered anybody with nerve enough to try it on so big a man. To keep his arm from being broken, the huge fellow gave a twisting leap, and Mullaly brought him over and down on his back to the plank floor, where Wolverine hit with

a force to shake the log walls. "Huh!" The tremendous grunt issued from his big chest.

Belmessiere's wolflike face held a glow of involuntary admiration, but his thumb was making a significant motion, and one of the gang at Mullaly's back slowly drew out a six-gun from under his parka. Wolverine was getting up, and as he put pressure on the knife hilt gripped in his hand there was a slow tearing sound as the blade slit through the fur sleeve.

"Mike! Mike, you old dear!"

It was a girl's voice. She was in the doorway leading to the back room, and she came running out with a silk nightgown trailing from under the robe she had thrown on. She was a pretty girl, mighty pretty for anywhere, and a vision of beauty up here in the far reaches of the Koyukuk.

"Natalie!" rumbled Mullaly in blank surprise, and then he caught the girl as she flung herself into his arms.

Belmessiere's slender hand made an emphatic motion. The gunman slid his weapon back under his parka. Wolverine, the knife upraised, relaxed with a regretful shrug.

"We—why, we was just havin' a little playful rattle," Mullaly stammered to the girl. Then he turned and said: "Boys, I want you to meet my kid sister, Natalie!"

THE unexpected appearance of Natalie just at that time had undoubtedly saved her brother's life—but it also had done something else to him, something which the sourdoughs in the district refused to believe for a while. The girl explained her sudden appearance in the North country casually—she wanted to see Mike again, she said, and anyway, the old folks sort of wanted a little news from their boy. It was strange, thinking of bruising Mike Mullaly as having a sister, and parents—but it was stranger

what the appearance of Natalie did to the man Mike Mullaly.

The lank "Spider" and red-headed Dan O'Brien, Mullaly's partners, first heard about it a couple of weeks later when they pulled in from a trip and stopped at the tent which Swan Kintgen had put up by the ashes of his burned cabin. Spider and O'Brien had been away a spell, and didn't know any of the news. The story of Belmessiere and his racketeering attempt to "organize" the trappers of the district made them ponder, but when little Swan Kintgen told about the change in Mike Mullaly, young O'Brien's face flamed as red as his carrot hair.

"Swan, I'm calling you a liar!" he advised.

"All right, Ay'm a liar!" rasped the little Scandinavian bitterly.

The two partners were silent as they made their way to the cabin. Nobody was there, so they made the trip down to the trading post. Slipping inside unnoticed, they sat in a dim corner and watched, and they saw that what Swan Kintgen had said was all too true—they saw what they might not have believed, even in seeing, unless they had been warned.

For the old Mike Mullaly was gone, utterly vanished. The shell of the man remained, his blood and bone, but the voice betrayed the change. The partners hadn't been inside two minutes when the hulking Wolverine came up to Mullaly and gave him a resounding thwack on the back that almost floored the Northerner, whirled him and cuffed him alongside the head, meanwhile calling a greeting. But it was plain to everybody there—except, perhaps, the girl—that Wolverine was roughing Mullaly up, trying to see how much bullying he could get away with.

Every one of Belmessiere's men took some sort of left-handed smack at Mullaly. They did everything from calling him names to throwing beer in his face.

And Mike Mullaly, the terrible fighter, the tough guy, took it all with a laugh.

It was too much. Spider and O'Brien had to leave. He just laughed it all off as a joke.

THAT VERY NIGHT little Swan Kintgen was gathering up the opposition to Belmessiere's enforced "union" of trappers. Maybe a half dozen men in the country still stood out against the racket after Mullaly had capitulated. Little Swan Kintgen was bitter over the yet unavenged death of his partner, Denver Greer.

Each of the men he visited that night had suffered some sort of retribution for refusing to join in the racket. One had found his furs slashed with a knife and provisions polluted and destroyed. Two others had been burned out; another had been shot at from ambush.

"Mullaly didn't lose his nerve!" growled one trapper. "He sold us out! Belmessiere offered him the job as president of the union and he took it. Sure, Mullaly says that when he's in it, the thing'll be run right—but you know what it means."

"Mullaly!" rumbled another. "He sold us out!"

"That be all right," muttered Swan Kintgen, his pinched face screwed up. "We're finished with Mike Mullaly—not yet!"

When Mullaly and his sister had left the trading post late that night, the huge Wolverine grinned at Belmessiere and said: "Well, boss, when are you goin' to let me mix with that guy, like you promised?"

"Don't git impatient," the wolflike one replied. "We can't do nothing to Natalie's brother. I like that gal. And Mike Mullaly won't be doin' no harm as president of the union for a while. He don't know the inside of things, and he makes a front for us."

"But, say, what about Mullaly's reputation? He's supposed to be a ring-

tailed terror, and the way he started out—— But when that girl showed up——”

“That’s another reason for takin’ it easy right now. I can’t believe he’s turned as soft as he makes out. We’ll watch.”

SPIDER AND O’BRIEN were at the cabin when they heard the dog team coming. They stammered acknowledgments to an introduction to Natalie, then followed Mullaly to the kennels to care for the dogs while the girl went inside the cabin.

Spider plunged squarely into the middle of things: “Mike, we was at the tradin’ post to-night when you was there.”

“Was you? Why the devil didn’t you say hello and have a drink with me?”

It was a hard thing to say, but Spider blurted it: “We didn’t do that on account you wasn’t the same old Mike we knowed before we went on the trip!”

Mullaly nodded, and kept on tending the dogs. “You’re right, boys. I’m a changed man—and glad I changed before it was too late.”

Then, while the partners listened with mouths slack, Mullaly, the tough-necked fighter of the North, said: “It was sight o’ the kid sister which made me see what I’d become. Just like gettin’ religion, I reckon. Seein’ her, I suddenly saw myself—how different I was from the old Mike Mullaly who left home years ago. I figured—well, after all, what would my father and mother think of a rough-house fighter like I’ve become? So I changed.

“Anyhow, I had a good straight talk with Belmessiere. He claims he didn’t have nothing to do with the death of Denver Greer, and he resigned as president o’ the trapper’s union and gave me the job, so I believe he’s on the square. I see, now, that a lot of the fightin’ I’ve done in the past has been useless. You

can do a lot of things without usin’ your fists.”

When Mullaly was finished with the dogs he went in the cabin, but the other two partners stayed outside to have a smoke.

“Well, it’s worse than I thought,” admitted Spider. “Imagine Mike Mullaly suddenly wantin’ to be mama’s nice little boy!”

“I don’t believe it!” declared O’Brien hotly. “Not even when he says it with his own mouth, I don’t believe it!”

“There’s only one thing t’ do, Dan. Just one thing. We got to tell that sister o’ his what she’s doing to him.”

“You’re right. An’ you tell her also that——”

“Me? I never said I’d tell her nothin’!”

So they flipped a coin, and young Dan O’Brien lost. His face was flushed to a deep wine color as the two came in the cabin, and he needed a couple of prods from the lank Spider before he finally gulped: “Miss—Miss Natalie, there are —— Wouldn’t you like to look at the stars? They sure are fetchin’ to-night.”

The girl melted him with an agreeing smile, and they went out. Spider and Mullaly talked of trifles while fifteen minutes passed, then another quarter hour, before Natalie and O’Brien came in out of the cold.

O’Brien motioned Spider to a corner and groaned: “I couldn’t do it! Ever’ time I got set to tell her somethin’, she’d turn them big eyes on me, and my jaw would freeze up!”

Spider very sarcastically suggested that O’Brien get Mullaly out, and he’d do the telling. But when O’Brien and Mullaly came back in Spider shrugged helplessly. The next day, while Mullaly and Natalie were away, the two partners discussed matters thoroughly.

It was Spider who finally came to the conclusion: “They’s just one thing t’ do—an’ that’s to take the girl clean

out of the country. One of us has got to do that."

"You mean, marry her?"

Spider nodded his head dismally. "It's the only way. Now, me, I'm a worthless sort o' person. I'll do it; I'll do it fer Mike."

O'Brien laid his hand on Spider's lean shoulder. "Mike Mullaly likes you, Spider. You're his favorite pardner, not me. *I'll* marry the girl."

They couldn't agree who was to make the sacrifice, so they finally flipped a coin. Spider won the toss, and O'Brien yelled for two out of three. One thing led to another, and when Mullaly and Natalie pulled in a couple of hours later O'Brien and Spider were still fighting.

Luckily, however, the scrapping pair heard the sledge approach, and when the girl came in the cabin the two were nonchalantly playing cards. The fact that the table they were playing on had to be supported against the wall because two legs were broken off seemed not to be worth mentioning, nor did O'Brien say anything about the very beautiful eye which was swelling rapidly shut, nor Spider remark about his puffed lips. The interior of the cabin was a shambles, but the fighters volunteered no information and Mullaly and Natalie were too well-bred to ask.

"By golly," whispered Spider to O'Brien later, "it was lucky that gal didn't suspect nothin' about us fightin'. When she come in I felt like a kid caught in the ice box. I kin see now how she'd make a new man out of Mullaly. One look o' them big eyes an' a guy gits all melted up inside."

FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS Natalie was rushed very hard by Spider, O'Brien, and Belmessiere. Never an afternoon went by without a sledge ride, never an evening without some sort of entertainment. As for Mullaly, he remained the same—all his fight gone. And then, as casual as you please, he

announced that as president of the trappers' union he was calling a meeting—for the purpose of voting in new officers.

This news was greeted by a roar of laughter from the sourdoughs. Another Mullaly trick, they said. He'd played like he lost his nerve until he got in solid, then he was going to oust the gang from the union.

Belmessiere took that viewpoint. "He played us double!" the wolflike leader snarled. "Actin' like he was a fool, he's organized the boys agin' us while we was asleep!"

The hulking Wolverine shrugged his tremendous shoulders. "One bullet will finish off any man, and be a lesson to the others."

"No. Not yet."

"You mean you're sweet on his sister!"

"You shut up!"

That afternoon Belmessiere made a trip to Mullaly's cabin to see Natalie; but she was not there. Spider was alone at the place. At Belmessiere's question, Spider grinned evilly, and informed him: "Natalie? She's probably headin' south with Dan O'Brien by now. He loaded on plenty of sledge provisions."

"Did that redhead kidnap my girl?"

"She'll be Mrs. O'Brien by now." Spider sighed. "Mike went with 'em as far as Bishop Green's cabin. They only wanted a quiet weddin'. And," continued Spider significantly, "mebbe with the girl gone, Mullaly will be his own self again."

Belmessiere headed back for the trading post at a run. He was halfway along the trail down the frozen creek bed when the hulking figure of Wolverine came into view around a bend. The huge man was running, his breath coming out in great white clouds in the frosty air.

"Boss!" he panted, and looked around furtively. "Boss, I just killed Swan Kintgen! We're in a jam!"

"I've told you to control that tem-

per," Belmessiere snapped, then he asked: "What about it?"

"Nobody knows nothin', yet. But I had to kill the runt! He comes in with a gun in his hands an' claims he'd got proof it was us bumped off his pardner, Denver Greer."

"What proof?"

"Dunno. He just started to tell me when I seen my chance as his gun barrel went down a bit, and I took the chance while I had it."

"How'd you do it?" asked Belmessiere.

"Knife. I hid the body——"

"Did you leave the knife where it would be found?"

The big man wrinkled up his narrow forehead for a moment, then of a sudden all the worry on his countenance smoothed out, and he laughed. "Oh, *that* knife!"

"Of course. Mullaly's knife. Yes."

MULLALY came up the river from Bishop Green's with a big grin on his face. Occasionally he would stop grinning long enough to whistle a few lively bars or whoop a bit to his dog team. When a mile below the trading post, he sighted a crowd of men coming toward him along the snow-covered ice.

"Too late for a charivari," he advised as he approached them. "Dan O'Brien an' Natalie are miles away by this time, honeymoonin'."

"This ain't a charivari," advised Belmessiere. "Wolverine, take his weapons."

Belmessiere's gang was there, together with just about every sourdough in the surrounding country.

"Your game's up, Mullaly," Belmessiere was saying. "Your knife with the carved handle was found by Swan Kintgen's body. You was tryin' to get control of the trappers' union, yes? That's why you called for this voting of officers. And you figured Swan was agin' you, so you done away with him. Maybe

he found out it was you who killed Denver Greer, and you had to shut him up, yes?"

This sort of talk a month before would have turned Mullaly into a fighting tornado. Spider, his lank figure jack-knifed in the willows bordering the river bank, grinned evilly to himself with anticipation. Natalie was gone; no need for Mullaly to play a part any longer. But soon Spider was smothering curses, for Mullaly had not switched back to his old fighting spirit. No, he was still sweetness and light, still a pacifist, still only a shell of his old self.

"Boys," Mullaly was saying, "I reckon we'd better talk this over."

Then two of Belmessiere's men grabbed the Northerner and began hustling him toward a little sheltered ravine where grew a clump of trees.

"We'll settle this thing right now for good and all," said the gang leader.

And Mullaly went, allowing himself to be shoved along by the two toughs, men he would have flung off and smashed to the ground with a couple of blows, not so long before.

One of Belmessiere's men climbed the tallest spruce in the grove, tied a rope around the top of it, and threw the end down. Then a dozen men pulled on the rope, bending the tree over like a taut bow and tying it down.

But even then, staring this situation in the face, Mullaly did nothing, "Boys," he said, "we'll talk this over."

"Hold it!" came Spider's shouted voice. There his lank figure was, atop a wind-swept boulder on the side of the ravine. In his hands was a revolver. "Ever'body turn your back and up with your hands! Mike, you take their weapons and toss 'em into that snowdrift!"

"But I——" began Mullaly.

"You do as I say or I'll plug you, too!" snarled Spider. "If you've suddenly gone too yaller to save yourself, then I'll do it for you. I'll save your



"Stop—— I'll shoot!"
 "Put that popgun down, sis."

hide if I have to shoot it full of holes in the process!"

Faced by this ultimatum, Mullaly obeyed, removing the weapons from the men and tossing them in the powdery snow, blown in a deep drift along one side of the ravine. Knives and firearms sank into the fluffy snow without a trace. But one knife Mullaly didn't get. He didn't know of Wolverine's habit of keeping a blade up his parka sleeve.

"Now, come on, Mike," ordered Spider. "We're travelin'." Spider clambered down to the floor of the ravine, still keeping his weapon trained on the fur-clad figures.

AND THEN Mullaly made a sudden grab, gave a wrench, and Spider was hurled to the snow, while Mullaly had the lank one's revolver. "Force," said Mullaly, "ain't necessary. Not a-tall. These boys didn't aim t' really string me up, they was just tryin' to scare a confession out of me. Sure, I could run away, but that wouldn't git the real killer. No," said Mullaly, "I've changed. I've seen that there's other things in life besides fists."

And with that he sailed the weapon he had taken from Spider into the drift.

"Now, boys, we'll talk this over like men——"

His speech cut off as three fur-clad figures hurled themselves at him. Mullaly went down with a frown on his face.

"Now, men! Can't we talk this here thing over?" he asked, and then, petulantly, just as a child might shove aside somebody annoying him, Mullaly pushed his big fist at one of the three, bearing him to earth. Then, with an exasperated gesture, he got his mukluk in the belly of another, and with one more impatient motion he laid the third man away, and began getting to his feet.

"Men, I don't aim to be bullheaded——" he began, but he had to save his breath a while, for all of Belmessiere's men except Wolverine were roaring to

the attack. By this time Spider was up side by side with Mullaly, and the lank one had an eager grin of evil intent on his face.

"I refuse," Mullaly said, laying over a terrific smash which felled one man like a beef under the hammer, "to be interrupted." *Biff! Crash!* The mighty fists flailed again. "I won't be interrupted when I'm tryin' to say somethin'!"

But the members of Belmessiere's gang kept right on interrupting, and Mullaly kept pushing them away and trying to speak. Spider had arms so long his fists seemed to be on jointed poles, and Spider wasn't even trying to talk.

Belmessiere and Wolverine watched. The big, bearlike one wanted to join the fight, but Belmessiere stopped him. As for the sourdoughs, they once again were seeing Mike Mullaly in action, and they were a bit chary about getting too close until the Northerner should tire a bit.

Seven men against two; that was the battle. Mullaly kept on trying to be reasonable, meanwhile ramming out his mighty fists like a pair of double jacks. He wasn't fighting, he was just trying to reason with those men, but they wouldn't listen. He finally had to throw a couple in the snowdrift to keep them quiet, and he laid a couple more to sleep for a while. Spider was accounting for the rest.

"NOW, MEN——" began Mullaly, but there was a new interruption:

"Mike, Mike! *Mike!* Oh, Mike!" came a very agitated voice—and standing there was Natalie! With her was Dan O'Brien, her new husband.

Mullaly groaned, the blood rushing to his head in embarrassment. "Now, sis," he stammered, "it wasn't me started it. Not me. Anyhow, I wasn't fightin'. I tried to reason, but they kept buttin' in. I——"

"Mike, you were *wonderful!*" cried the girl, and she leaped to give her brother a big hug.

"Yeah, but if mother an' pa find out that——"

"You silly! That's why I had to come back. I couldn't go home and tell the old folks you were still the sissie you used to be in the old days! It's worried them a lot, wondering if you ever snapped out of it——"

She went on from there a bit, but Mullaly maybe didn't hear her, for he seemed to be strangling. It must have been something of a shock to him. After swallowing his pride and making a heroic effort to change his life for the better because of the family, it must have been a bit stunning to find out his family had wanted him just as he had been—a roistering, hell-raising man among men.

Mullaly started to laugh, his guffaw echoing from the snowy walls of the ravine. And then he stiffened as one of Belmessiere's men crawled out of the snow behind him, in one hand packing a revolver he had found in the powdery drift.

"Good work!" cried Belmessiere. "Good work! Now, let me have that gun, and you take the girl out of sight while we get the business over with."

There is organized law above the circle—of a sort. An occasional U. S. deputy marshal makes an infrequent trek into the arctic interior. But, as in all sparsely settled frontiers, the men rely on their own code, and enforce it themselves. Little Swan Kintgen had been murdered, and the bloody knife belonging to Mike Mullaly had been found by the body. These Northerners were not men who would put the territory to the expense of carting Mullaly to a court and trying him; they'd seen the evidence and they were acting on it.

That spruce was tied down, every fiber of the tough wood straining against the rope, trying to right itself. A shorter rope had been tied to the bowed tree,

with the other end around Mullaly's neck. There is a cruel efficiency to such a method of hanging a man. Mullaly's two partners, Spider and O'Brien, were lying in the snow, lashed hand and foot.

"Boys, can I say a few words?" Mullaly asked soberly.

Belmessiere growled a denial to the request, but the sourdoughs overrode the gang leader. Belmessiere gave Wolverine the nod, and the huge man edged close to Mullaly, not taking any chances.

"Are you all sure that was *my* knife by the body?" Mullaly asked.

The sourdoughs nodded. Everybody knew that knife which Mullaly had got from the Eskimos. It had a whalebone handle with intricate carving, and Mullaly had cut his initials in it. There wasn't a possibility of there being two such knives.

"That's all I want to know," said Mike Mullaly. "'Cause now I know who the killer is. He didn't think I knowed who stole my knife, and I didn't say nothing because——"

"Enough of this blarney!" snapped Belmessiere, and one mittened hand made a gesture which caused the hulking Wolverine to go into action. Cold steel flashed as the concealed knife slid out of the big man's sleeve, and with one slash of the blade Wolverine had sliced through the taut rope holding the spruce in its bent position. With a flip like a straightening bow the tree was snapped erect, the sharp-needed branches whistling through the cold air.

Mullaly was jerked up as the tree straightened.

MULLALY'S REFLEXES were like those of a lynx. It had been a bluff, pure and simple, a desperate stab in the dark, when he had said he knew the one who had stolen his carved-handle knife. He had been fighting for time, trying to avoid extinction by every possible manner.

But Belmessiere hadn't known that was a bluff, nor had Wolverine, and so the huge one had acted quickly, to cut off Mullaly's speech before he told something. Even as Wolverine's knife flashed and his purpose became plain, Mullaly gave a quick double wrap of the noose rope around one big mittened hand, and with the other he snatched at the wrist holding the knife. He was too late to stop the blade from slicing through the taut hemp holding the tree down, but as the spruce snapped erect, Mullaly had hold of Wolverine's massive wrist, had hold with a steel-tension grip such as few men possess.

When the tree whipped erect, Mullaly went with it. The strain seemed almost to rip that one arm from its socket—but the double loop around the hand did not give, and the snapping rope expended its force there—not on the neck vertebra. The strain was greater, also, because as Mullaly went up he retained his grip on big Wolverine, and the pair of them were hoisted together.

The weight of the second man took some of the snap out of the tree's flip, so that the two men landed among the topmost branches without a great deal of shock. Mullaly wrapped legs around the trunk, kept hold of the knife wrist, released his other hand from the rope and began hammering at the stubble-spiked countenance of the massive Wolverine.

The big man got a foothold, also, and he returned Mullaly's blows with interest, the tremendous power of his free arm crashing against the Northerner's jaw like a bludgeon.

From below, Belmessiere tried to shoot, but the revolver's action was frozen from the immersion in the snow-drift. Mullaly was receiving a terrific barrage from Wolverine's clublike fist. He was twisting at the wrist with all his might, trying to make the big man let go of the knife.

Finally the blade slithered down

among the branches. Mullaly released the wrist and began using both fists at the stubble-covered face. But his advantage was short-lived. The big man also had two free arms now, and Wolverine was in the kind of close quarters where his tremendous bulk and strength counted. Mullaly tried to beat him away, but the big man clawed close, ramming his face in Mullaly's chest so as to be hard to hit, while his massive arms were around Mullaly's torso and began to squeeze. There was unearthly power in those tremendous, hair-covered arms. Mullaly beat blindly at the round ball of the skull rammed against his chest.

Then Mullaly's legs began to give despite himself. Wolverine was braced with his mighty legs against the trunk of the tree, pushing. Mullaly knew the object of the maneuver, but the big man had the advantage of a straight push, and Mullaly's legs were dragged from the tree trunk.

HOG-TIED on the snow-covered ground, red-headed Dan O'Brien ripped out a sulphurous string of curses, and Spider joined him as only Spider could. For it looked like the last fight for Mike Mullaly. The massive Wolverine had turned the battle just the way he wanted. Both men were hanging now from that noose rope—and the loop was around Mullaly's neck, the weight of both bodies on it. All Wolverine had to do was to keep that bear hug, and his weight dragging against that noose would do the rest.

Mullaly had wrapped his own legs around Wolverine's tremendous body, and both his hands were on the big man's neck, thumbs crushing air out of the windpipe. In some respects this final test of endurance was equal, for while Wolverine had the more brute strength, Mullaly's legs were equal to the big man's arms in crushing power, and while all the weight came on Mullaly's neck,

the Northerner's cinching digits at the big man's windpipe closed off all breath. The spruce was still a bit bent from the weight, and the two men hung there motionless from that rope, while the seconds ticked off. The partners' curses died away. Absolute silence prevailed. A minute went by, and then it incredibly stretched into another, and the locked fingers hung up there in the tree top, moving not a muscle. More seconds dragged on.

And then Wolverine went wild. His bear hug came free from around Mullaly's torso and the big arms flailed desperately against extinction, hammering blindly in an attempt to get life-giving air. The big hands tore at Mullaly's wrists, trying to rip away those steel fingers. But still Mullaly kept his grip, even though the noose was shutting off his own wind. And then, as Wolverine's motions began getting feeble, Mullaly let go the neck, reached up, and with legs still squeezing the big man's body, Mullaly raised himself up enough by sheer strength to loosen the loop around his neck. His breath came in with the sound of a blowing whale.

He hung up there for another couple of minutes, legs still cinching the big man's torso, gaining back his strength. Wolverine was whining something. He seemed to be pleading for his life. Mullaly finally loosened his leg scissors and came down, leaving Wolverine clinging limply to the branches.

Standing on the snow again, Mullaly was swaying from fatigue poisons, reeling drunkenly.

"We're still finishing him off!" roared the voice of Belmessiere, and he led his gang into the attack.

MULLALY moved, with surprising quickness, to the side of his two partners. He had recovered the knife Wolverine had dropped, and two swipes with it freed Spider and O'Brien from

their bonds. Then the knife was hurtled into the snow bank as Mullaly threw it.

The three partners were on their feet as the attack came, and if there are upon this earth three men who can use their fists to any better advantage, then they'll have to lick the Northerners to prove it. The first wave of Belmessiere's gang was beaten back. But then the entire group of sourdoughs surged in, and as fast as one face sank down another took its place. There were just too many fists. Mullaly got in hand-to-hand combat with Belmessiere, found the man quick as a wolf and as treacherous, but mowed him down.

And then Mullaly was down, and the two partners besides.

"Stop! Stop, or I'll shoot!"

Natalie was there. A true sister of Mike Mullaly, she had eluded the man set to guard her, and had secured a rifle from her sledge pack.

"Get back!" she snapped, and the chalkiness of her curving jaw bespoke determination. "Come on, boys, we'll run for it!"

"Put that popgun down, sis," advised Mullaly, sitting up. He felt of a swelling eye fondly, and rubbed his sore neck with a tender gesture of ecstasy. "Put that weapon away—or else turn it on Belmessiere an' his gang. The sourdoughs don't want me or my pardners no more. When I had Wolverine at my mercy up there in the tree, the big guy confessed all about killin' Denver Greer an' Swan Kintgen—an' some other stuff him an' the gang done."

"If he—— Say!" exploded a sourdough, feeling of his jaw. "If Wolverine confessed, then why did you——" The voice ended in a sputter.

Mullaly grinned. "You mean why didn't I say so when I climbed down outta the tree? Why, that'd spoiled ever'thing! I seen a lovely fight a-comin' up, an' I sure was achin' fer a scrap, after bein' reformed for the past month!"

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Weirdly two arms floated toward him, clutching for him—

JERRY HAND was cunning. Each step he made across Devil Bog was taken after the beady brightness of his rodent eyes had ferreted out the solid footing beneath the slime. That was because Jerry Hand was acutely aware of the lurking death beneath the steaming, weed-tufted morass. He had seen cattle struggle helplessly, and sink out of sight.

His face glistened with sweat—with a shiny film strangely like the glaze on the treacherous quicksand.

Jerry Hand was going to commit murder!

*\$50⁰⁰ Prize
Story for February*

DEVIL BOG

by Tom B. Stone

HIS ALIBI was perfect. Within earshot of the town gossip, he had voiced his intention of driving across to Sagamore City for a job that paid better than his handy-man wages in Willow Creek. On leaving in late afternoon, he had craftily driven past the general store of the slumberous little Maine town with its quota of porch loungers, avid-eyed for interesting news. For wasn't it news that Jerry Hand, garbed in his Sunday black, should drive in the rickety buggy across to Sagamore City?

Cleverly, Jerry Hand had waited deep in the willows overlooking Devil Bog, until dusk had fallen. Then, leaving the horse and buggy effectively screened, he had started across the morass.

Nervously, he glanced into the thin

mist, through the ropy gray tendrils which were like writhing serpents. His feet squished through black stagnancy. Up from the ooze swarmed a cloud of black gnats, buzzing about his head, a thick mist of pestilence.

Stinging, biting, gouging his skin, they hummed until the stocky, black-suited figure beat them away angrily. He broke into a run, but the black slime was treacherous. His right foot splashed awkwardly, sliding off the trail, and his heart choked into his throat as he fell.

Mud sucked at his legs, drawing him irresistibly down. Jerry Hand threw himself backward, prone, grabbing at stiff tufts of grass. Razorlike, they burned across his palms. But he held on with desperation born of panic. Perspiration stood out on his forehead. His eyes bulged; his breath came in short, sobbing bursts. But his fists never loosened, and, slowly, he managed to pull his body out.

Free, he lay gasping like a fish out of water. He flopped around, his face like soft dough kneaded by fear. His nerve was gone, and sight of the steaming bog whipped him completely. Trembling, he crawled along the narrow trail on his hands and knees.

His black suit was a stain of brown, sticky mud. Like old blood, it seeped through the fabric, clinging tenaciously. Where his icy hand had wiped his damp brow, streaks of brown daubed across.

But Jerry Hand never turned back. An irresistibly strong power led him forward, urged his lagging muscles on. Through the mist ahead, like dim stars, two spots of color danced. Jerry Hand saw them and his oozing courage returned. He fought down a wild impulse to race ahead wildly, to rip the great clasp knife from his pocket—

He must be calm he reminded himself, and work with method. Creeping close to the squatty bungalow, dark with age,

hugging the knoll above Devil Bog, he peered in the lighted window as he had done that afternoon.

He saw "Granny" Bell, her withered, ropy arms in her shawl-draped lap, rocking unceasingly in the battered walnut relic of better days. She had been rocking that afternoon, too—when he peeped craftily in.

Not many people crossed Devil Bog to Granny Bell's tiny homestead. They talked, though, of the money she got from old Colonel Bell's Civil War pension, whispered of the hidden gold she had hoarded in the dismal ruins of what had once been a prosperous gentleman's farm.

Her dried, yellow hands had been greedily emptying a pewter pot, spilling a stream of shining yellow pieces from the black-silver mouth. Jerry had run then—with terror eating at his heart, and avarice following closely. Fear that Granny Bell might have seen him; and hungry lust for the gold.

JERRY HAND pushed against Granny Bell's door, lightly, tentatively. It was locked. A thin, cold smile broke his hard mouth. His foot came back, drove hard, and the panel splintered with a crash. He thrust his hand in, twisting the key, and slid into the hallway, the smell of musty mildew in his face.

He heard Granny Bell running, her slippered feet shuffling across the bare floors. Her wizened, fear-struck face popped past a door.

"Who's that?" she called, her puckered mouth twisting. "I'll not have ye in my house. Get out! I'm a poor old woman—with death on me!"

Jerry Hand slid from the shadows. The knife snaked from the darkness and glittered. Once—twice—it struck!

It bit deeply, with the keenness of a finely whetted blade. Granny Bell

crumpled brokenly, her eyes blazing, her mouth cursing invectives on Jerry's head.

"Ye'll die fer this. I swear, ye'll die!" she screeched. "Straight to the pot of hell ye'll go! Straight——"

Granny Bell's mouth bubbled crimson, welling across her lips. "An' ye'll not find money here, ye thief! But—I'll be here. I'll be here—to take it—from—ye——"

Jerry Hand's face was cold and stiff, his lips glued together. He shivered, and stared numbly at the dead hag, hearing again her curse. He picked her body up and stumbled down the slope to the bog, throwing her far into the swamp. And, long after it had passed from sight, he remained rooted to the ooze, his face warped with fear.

Jerry Hand had no compassion about murder—but fear for his own life unbalanced him, unnerved him. He swallowed hard and climbed the weedy incline to the house.

He turned once, but the bog was still—sinuous, writhing shapes dancing across the mucky surface. Then a hand of clammy chill struck Jerry Hand's heart. From the house came the creak of a rocker—steady, insistent.

He fought against the overwhelming desire to run—to run anywhere. Quelling his panic, Jerry Hand pushed past the clothes rack at the open front door—sweat standing out on his brow, his lips trembling—to creep to the kitchen door.

His feet froze to the floor. The rocking chair was moving slowly to and fro! But there was no one in it!

AS THOUGH he were being strangled, his eyes bulged wildly. His breath came in choking jerks. He leaped to the rocker, stilling it with a palsied hand.

He listened, heard nothing and went slowly through every nook and cranny of the kitchen. He found nothing.

Granny Bell had hidden her hoard of wealth beyond prying eyes.

Jerry went into the next room, tearing desperately through the drawers of two dressers. Reaching out for the last drawer, his hand stiffened. His brain beat with the surge of terror-driven blood.

Creak—creak—creak——

His tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth. But fear of frustration overrode his panic, and Jerry Hand leaped to the doorway. He lurched through into the kitchen eyes distended, mouth agape. The rocker was creaking dismally, eerily—with no one in the worn seat!

Jerry's breath sobbed across swollen lips. Leaping toward the chair, his foot crashed it back against the wall, where it slammed, banging noisily. But it continued weaving crookedly.

Each shrill whine and creak sent icy horror stabbing into his chest. Just as his knife had bit so deeply, so deadly, into Granny Bell. And he saw the withered crone tottering across the kitchen, gesticulating with yellow, dried hands——

"Ye'll die fer this. I swear, ye'll die!"

That's what she had sworn. The grim malediction sent an icy shiver down his spine. Jerry Hand stumbled back.

"I'll be here," Granny Bell's screeching whine was in his ears still. "I'll be here to take it from ye."

Jerry Hand's face was cold, masklike; he shivered with intense, biting chill. He rubbed his eyes, but Granny Bell's hate-filled face was gone, blended with the shadows. One hand wiped across his mouth, and, using the last remnant of courage in his shaking body, he crept back to the other room.

In the last drawer Jerry Hand found the pewter pot. But his trembling fingers did not have time to lift the stained lid. He could hear the rattle of coins

within—the ear-satisfying rattle that meant an end to Devil Bog.

The front door squealed on rusty hinges. Clammy wind breathed on his neck!

JERRY HAND pressed the pot to his breast with a trembling hand, and slid forward against the damp wall, mouth twisted with cunning, eyes aglitter with murder lust. The crimson-stippled knife jutted out before him.

He edged close to the door, flame licking in the depths of his suspicious stare. A husky mumble broke his lips. Some one was hiding behind the clothes near the front door!

Some one was waiting to leap upon him and snatch the gold for which he had committed murder. Deep in his chest, Jerry Hand snarled. Like an animal more than a man, he leaped forward, driving the knife through the wind-rustling garments.

His driving slashes whipped the coats from the rack—and Jerry Hand saw a wild, maniacal face leering at him.

He went utterly insane then. Fear and rage drove the knife whistling through the air. The gleaming blade deflected from the glass mirror, reflecting his own distorted countenance, and shot downward. Jerry Hand tried to swerve the blow, but every ounce of his work-hardened muscles was behind the blade. It fanged into his side, ripping through flesh like butter.

A thick, roaring sound welled into his ears. He crumpled to his knees, pain searing across his body like white-hot brands. Crazy laughter bubbled across his lips—husky peals of demoniacal mirth.

Jerry Hand crawled from the corner, his ears dulled with agony, but suddenly sensitive to the hateful creak of the rocker. He dragged himself to the doorway, lifting haggard eyes as Granny Bell's scrawny cat leaped lightly to the floor, its hind legs driving the aged

rocker back and forth. Like a flitting shadow, the cat was gone into the darkness.

Dully, Jerry Hand saw the reason for the rocker's creaking, but his stare was empty and vacuous. Holding the pewter pot with hungry grasp, he managed to stand up. He weaved a drunken path to the door, stumbling as a mantle of lightness fell across him.

The ropy mist wreathed about him as he staggered down the slope. His eyes went across the steaming stretch of black bog to the willows where the horse and buggy were secreted. Five minutes and Jerry Hand was away—with enough gold to nourish his greed.

Near the trail he saw a white shape rise up and drift toward him, wraithlike. Weirdly, two arms floated ahead, clutching for him. He screamed and choked on blood that bubbled into his throat. He shook a fist at the writhing phantom of mist and ran crookedly toward the trail threading the morass.

His legs were rubbery, trembling beneath him. The wound in his body was a ball of fire now. He heard Granny Bell's screeching voice behind him, and stumbled faster—faster—

He slid on a hidden root, and toppled headlong into the bog. Like a sucking sea, the mud leaped about his thrashing form and manacled it.

The pewter pot hurtled from his arms, struck a log and fell onto the trail, losing its lid. From the dirty silver interior a stream of bright and shining yellow pieces spewed.

Jerry Hand's eyes, avid still, shot to them. His arms, sinking into the bog, waved feebly, fingers reaching for the shining yellow. But he was trapped—caught inexorably by the muck.

Then he realized what Granny Bell had hoarded: gleaming brass buttons. Buttons that shone so much like gold. Brass buttons from the military jacket of old Colonel Bell!



"Me not soldier now. Me finish, all done."

FOR ALL of fifteen minutes the commanding officer had been speaking. Head up and facing him, Private O'Reddy appeared very attentive, but wasn't—he was thinking of a dancer in El Obeid.

"Frankly, Private O'Reddy," the commanding officer went on, "it's a downright shame for a man twelve years in the service to go out as he came in, a private. No credit to yourself, you know, or to the army."

O'Reddy's thoughts revolved. "Windy old duffer," he said to himself.

He heard: "Expect it, you know, of an empty head; but you, O'Reddy, you've got brains. Trouble is, you haven't always used 'em in the right way. Downright shame! You ought to be a captain or major to-day. Would be, if you weren't so stubborn. Twice you were advanced in rank; twice demoted. For acting independently of your superior officer's instructions, I believe."

O'Reddy permitted a sigh to escape his lips. "Get done with it," he growled inwardly.

Said the commandant: "You've been in lots of hot water, Private O'Reddy, and I could name a half dozen officers who'll breathe easier from now on."

The Time-Expired Man

by Robert Allen Watt

He gazed through the window, his eyes for a minute on the distant hills. Then: "You've been a splendid soldier, O'Reddy, for all of your annoying little insubordinations. Lord! The things you've done under fire!"

Little insubordinations! Considering the temperament of the man, O'Reddy's self-control was magnificent.

"Twelve years a brave and capable soldier, and you finish up a private!" The commanding officer shook his head. "Should think you'd feel that you'd let yourself down, that you hadn't gotten much out of the years."

O'Reddy glanced down at his khaki-coated chest, then up. "I've got me medals, sir," he said.

His hand was grasped by the commandant, who said, "And you have my best wishes, Ex-private Stubborn O'Reddy."

"Thank 'e, sir," O'Reddy said.

"Homeward bound? There's a motor transport for Khartum in the morning, you know."

Said O'Reddy: "Well, sir, you see—you see, sir, there's a dancer over in El Obeid."

O'Reddy pocketed his discharge and last pay check and, followed by the commandant's hearty laughter, walked toward the door.

Just outside stood a company cap-

tain. O'Reddy, no longer bound by rules and regulations, but forgetting the fact, snapped a salute. The captain, hands on hips, regarded him insolently, said: "Out of the service, eh, Stubborn?"

"Yes, sir," O'Reddy agreed. "Out!"

"I shed no tears over our parting," the captain told him.

"I'm even gayer than that!" O'Reddy retorted, and turned on his heels.

ALL OF THIS was now two days past.

His every step leaving a trail of imprints in the sands of the Sudan desert, Torc O'Reddy, ex-private in the King's Rifles, plodded in an almost direct line with the now barely discernible water hole and shade. He would, luck holding, rest within the hour.

Meanwhile, the blaze of an unmerciful midday sun beat down on the sands, and the heat, thrown back, danced like flickering, transparent fire tongues before his protesting eyes. The heat flames leaped up at his hands and face.

For six hours he'd been afoot, having, before sunup, resumed his traverse of the long stretch to El Obeid. At the water hole he'd eat and drink, rest and sleep until, with peculiar unerringness, he'd awoken in the dawn-preceding darkness, be again on his way.

O'Reddy didn't miss the drums and the bugles; he was done with soldiering. He could, at the moment, do very well with a drink—a drink such as was obtainable within a short walk of the barracks.

The sand under his feet was a bit too soft; he walked, not with the steady and measured *tramp, tramp, tramp* of the battalion's brisk step, but ploddingly, laboriously and doggedly.

O'Reddy had been long in the Sudan, had soldiered up and down the hot country for eight years. One liked the land or didn't, wanted more of it or felt fed

up with it. O'Reddy's feelings, after the years, were unconcernedly between the extremes.

Of other matters, however—these indirectly concerning the land, but not of it—he'd formed definite and decidedly strong convictions; opinions that were decidedly uncomplimentary: Of things and men and orders; chiefly, of certain men and the manner of their ordering. He hadn't been alone in forming and holding uncomplimentary convictions; the trouble had been that he'd had to keep his to himself. The officers didn't.

O'Reddy trudged on. The sameness of the desert scene, a wide undulating expanse of wind-swept sand, gave him opportunity for thought. His present thought might better have been in anticipation of the days ahead, considering the promise held. However, a blazing sun overhead and shifting sands underfoot are things more conducive to the disquietude in thought.

So now O'Reddy—with guttural-voiced ejaculatory punctuations—thought of the officary:

"Officers!" he scoffed. "Commanding officer—he's cricket—knows his Sudan onions. That captain, now, and his pet lieutenant—drillin' men like they was on Buckingham Parade—close to the hills, too—them a-tellin' me—me that's been through seven campaigns—O'Reddy this and O'Reddy that—in-subordinations. Bah! Mind the time I told that university corps graduate he'd forgot to post the sentry groups. Ha! Soldiering—bah! Some day the Bantu warirors will swoop down an' cut 'em to pieces. What the hell! I'm a time-expired man."

O'Reddy gained the three-treed water hole, sat down in the scant shade.

O'REDDY'S sharp sense of hearing telegraphed a warning. He came out of his sleep quickly, his trained body not

stirring. He saw, through the screening fringe of his still-lowered eyelids, the twilight of evening.

And, a few feet away, several pairs of brown-black bare feet and skinny shins. There was much muttered talk. O'Reddy managed an upward glance. Bantu warriors. One man came close, stooped, shook O'Reddy's arm.

O'Reddy opened his eyes, feigned surprise and sat up. He glanced around, counted quickly, grinned and waved his hand in friendly fashion. There were eight blacks standing, and, squatting on the opposite side of the water hole, double that number. There were rifles, too; apparently one for every man.

"These Bantus," O'Reddy told himself, "are miles off their own stamping grounds. I wonder 'bout that."

Well, he understood a bit of the lingo—would find out, maybe. The eight blacks squatted beside him, spoke with tongue and gesturing hands. They pointed fingers at, and touched his uniform. O'Reddy understood, finally.

"No," he said, "not soldier now. Me finish, all done—all done soldier-fight. See?"

The eight blacks chattered like wild cockatoos. It was too rapid for O'Reddy to savvy. They wanted, now, to know how he'd come to the water hole, and where he was going. O'Reddy was headed for El Obeid. The blacks chattered excitedly, repeating the name. After more palaver the blacks got up, led O'Reddy to the larger, squatting group. He smothered an exclamatory whistle—the blacks had a swell-looking machine gun.

Much palaver. And O'Reddy got the sense of it, understood the requisition and the underlying motive clearly. The Bantus didn't savvy the operation of a machine gun—they were putting it up to him.

O'Reddy asked the headman for his top-side shooting man. A black came and squatted down. By the agencies of

voice, pantomime and actual operation, O'Reddy gave instructions. When he tried to place the black's hand in operating position, the man drew away. The Bantu's top-side shooting man was afraid of the machine gun.

The headman didn't order him back. Instead, gathering his cloak snugly about his body, he raised an arm and pointed toward the northeast. Four blacks walked off in that direction, darkness swallowing them at one hundred yards. The headman touched O'Reddy's arm, pointed again toward the northeast.

O'Reddy shook his head. "No, no," he said, his own arm pointing toward the south. "El Obeid—go El Obeid."

There were twenty-six Bantu warriors, every man armed with rifle and knife. O'Reddy marched beside the headman.

They hiked through the long night, rested a day, marched again, and, in the early light of the new day—

THE BANTU WARRIORS were deployed in advantageous positions behind sand dunes overlooking a narrow, winding road. They'd made O'Reddy set the machine gun up well forward. He was ten yards distant from the nearest black—save for the man at his back. That one kept within arm's reach, a knife in his hand. O'Reddy would have to kill or be killed.

A dust cloud lifted at the road's bend. O'Reddy glanced around. The Bantus eyes were terrible. Looking like a swarm of little brown bugs, a battalion came into view.

O'Reddy swore. There wasn't a single scout in advance of the column. That captain, damn him!

The black's first volley stopped the battalion short. No damage, O'Reddy saw. He sprayed a dozen leads high over the battalion. Khaki-clad men were running for places of concealment. A sharp point touched O'Reddy's back. His gun spoke thrice, stopped. He

turned, motioned. The black squirmed forward. O'Reddy pointed at the gun's support. "Hold! Hold!" he barked, illustrating.

The black sheathed his knife, grasped the gun supports. O'Reddy snatched the knife. He jerked the gun around,

swung his body over the bank edge, picked the twenty-five off, one by one by one—

"You, O'Reddy?" The commanding officer asked.

"Just leaving, sir," O'Reddy answered throatily, "for El Obeid!"



"Gentlemen, in every Briton's heart is well implanted the ancient common-law maxim that a man's house is his castle."

WE WERE all gathered before Hank Logan's bar for our morning's morning. Hank said, "Damn it, the proprietor of a bar ain't got no rights at all at law!"

The old personal-injury lawyer

No Adequate Remedy

by Lambert Fairchild

clutched the cue to sound off again. We listened attentively to the old Roman as he strode up and down the bar, dragging his game leg after him like a lame admiral stomping his quarter-deck.

"There are many instances, gentlemen, of wrongs perpetrated and consequent injuries suffered for which the law affords no adequate remedy."

He stopped and glared at Hank. "Another whisky, sir!"

"It was back in the late seventies," he went on. "I was in the district attorney's office out in Helena, Montana. Labor troubles were rife in that mining

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country and our office resembled nothing more than a government arsenal, with its racks of loaded rifles around the walls, ready for the deputy marshals whenever occasion for their effective use might arise.

"From Cornwall in England had come thousands of stalwart Cornish miners and their families; great breeders, those Cousin Jacks, as we called them, and the hale, deep-bosomed Cousin Jennies, as we called the women, bore them good old-fashioned families of hardy children.

"And into the office one bright morning, staggering across the threshold, came a little Cornishman. Gentlemen, he was in a most distressing condition; it being immediately apparent that he was suffering intense mental as well as physical agonies. Two of his front teeth were missing; his right ear was ragged and his left eye looked like an impressionistic 'Purple Sunset Following Storm.'"

Eminent counsel raised his glass with an impressive sweep. "Your very good health, gentlemen." He held it forth to Hank Logan, with a gesture that demanded immediate attention.

"I recognized our caller," he continued, with a refilled glass, "in spite of his disheveled appearance, as a most excellent and worthy straw boss in one of the near-by mines, and to me he turned with his recital of wrongs.

"It seemed that a few weeks since, he had sent to Cornwall, England, for his cousin and boyhood chum, and brought him over to enjoy the pursuit of happiness under the Stars and Stripes and in the cozy little home which he had established for himself and his attractive, buxom wife—a fine specimen of the genus 'Cousin Jennie.'

"IT WOULD SEEM that in her desire to welcome the newly arrived cousin, she had somewhat overdone the rites of hospitality. The guest in the home

had finally supplanted my little friend in his wife's affections. The Cornish being a very thorough race, he had finished off by beating his host to a pulp, to a frazzle, well-nigh beyond recognition, thrown him from his own house, and announced his intention of remaining to rule the roost.

"Gentlemen, in every Briton's heart is well implanted the ancient common-law maxim that a man's house is his castle. This man, my friend, had lost not only his home, but his marital rights had been invaded as well. I gazed for a moment only, at the human wreck who stood before me.

"Then I strode—yes, gentlemen, I strode, I say—to one of the racks of loaded rifles along the wall, selected therefrom a rifle from which I casually extracted a shell and as casually replaced it in the magazine. I then sauntered from the room and down the hall, leaving the loaded rifle lying across my desk."

Again eminent counsel paused and glowered at Hank, who refilled his glass amidst the quiet. With a regal gesture, the lawyer toasted the assemblage.

"When I returned, the rifle had disappeared and my little Cousin Jack was not to be seen.

"Upon the ensuing morning, the coroner's jury rendered a verdict of justifiable homicide. Only another instance, gentlemen, of a wrong perpetrated and an injury suffered for which the law afforded no adequate remedy."

Draining his glass of whisky, the old Roman swung himself about and departed, dragging his game leg after him. Hank sighed and polished his spotless bar where a silver dollar should have reposed, but did not.

Hank regarded the empty spot for a long moment. Then he announced, "Damn it, as I was saying, the proprietor of a bar ain't got no rights at all at law! Some people don't even ask for credit. They just ask for whisky."

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20x4-40-20	\$2.15	\$2.40	\$5.85
20x4-50-20	2.25	2.50	5.85
20x4-50-21	2.45	2.80	5.85
20x4-75-19	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-20	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-21	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-22	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-23	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-24	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-25	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-26	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-27	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-28	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-29	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-30	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-31	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-32	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-33	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-34	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-35	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-36	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-37	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-38	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-39	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-40	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-41	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-42	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-43	2.45	2.85	5.85
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20x4-75-46	2.45	2.85	5.85
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20x4-75-66	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-67	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-68	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-69	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-70	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-71	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-72	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-73	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-74	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-75	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-76	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-77	2.45	2.85	5.85
20x4-75-78	2.45	2.85	5.85
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Boilermaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Heating | <input type="checkbox"/> Ventilation | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge and Building Foreman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Estimating | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning | | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engineer | | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Electric Engineer | | <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer | | <input type="checkbox"/> Mine Foreman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management of Inventions | <input type="checkbox"/> Machinist | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Locomotives | | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Patternmaker | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Section Foreman | | <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Brakes | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Signalmen | <input type="checkbox"/> Woolen Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Welding, Electric and Gas | <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering | | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Shop Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Mechanics | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering | | <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit Growing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment of Metals | <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Farming |

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Service Station Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial Work | <input type="checkbox"/> First Year College Subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence | <input type="checkbox"/> College Preparatory |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accountant | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |
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- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home Dressmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Dressmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Millinery | <input type="checkbox"/> Foods and Cookery |
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A CHANCE, SIS
JIM HATES
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**- JIM'S
PIMPLY
FACE
MADE
HIM
BALKY
ABOUT
GOING
PLACES
➔
READ STORY**



THAT GUY'S A REGULAR
HEENIT I TELL YOU -
JUST STICKS AROUND
BY HIMSELF - WOULDN'T
TAKE A GIRL OUT
ON A BETT...

IS THAT SO - WELL
I'LL BET I CAN BREAK
HIM DOWN, YOU WATCH-



NOT HURT ARE YOU - HERE -
YOU'D BETTER LET ME HELP
YOU OVER TO THE BANK

OOOH-OUCH - MERCY
I JUST C-C-CAN'T SEEM
TO S-STAND UP ON
THESE SKATES



THANKS SO MUCH - YOU'RE
JIM GREENE AREN'T YOU?
I'VE HEARD MY BROTHER
BOB TALK ABOUT YOU
LOTS. WHY DON'T YOU
EVER COME OVER WITH
THE REST OF THE
CROWD?

OH-I-ER I COULDN'T-
THAT IS YOU SEE - I'M-ER
- I'M NO GO AT SOCIAL
STUFF



WELL, WELL, MISS
CLEOPATRA, DIDN'T
GET FAR THAT TIME -
DID YOU?

H'IM - BOB, I BET I KNOW WHY
HE ACTS STAND-OFFISH, IT'S HIS
FACE. ALL THOSE PIMPLES, WHY
DON'T YOU TELL HIM ABOUT
FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST
YOU KNOW HOW IT
HELPED YOU!



HERE - TRY THIS
ONE!

WHO SAID JIM
DOESN'T LIKE
GIRLS?

OK, SIS - I'LL EAT MY
WORDS. YOU AND
THOSE YEAST CAKES
SURE HAVE WORKED
WONDERS. JIM'S A NEW
GUY SINCE THOSE
PIMPLES
LEFT HIM!

Don't let Adolescent Pimples keep YOU from making new friends

COUNTLESS boys and girls shun company and avoid "dates" because they hate to be seen with a pimply face.

After the start of adolescence—from about 13 to 25, or even longer—important glands develop and final growth takes place. The whole body is disturbed. The skin gets oversensitive. Waste poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin. Pimples result.

Fleischmann's fresh Yeast is helping thousands of young people to

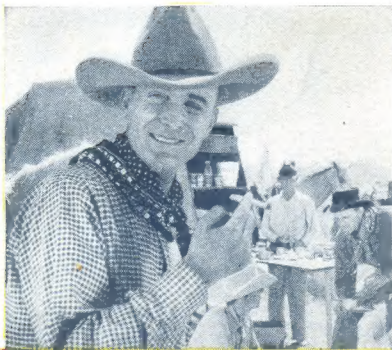
overcome adolescent pimples. It clears these skin irritants out of the blood. As a result, the pimples go away.

Eat 3 cakes of Fleischmann's Yeast daily, one about 1/2 hour before each meal—plain, or in a little water—until your skin is clear. Start today.



—clears the skin—
by clearing skin irritants
out of the blood

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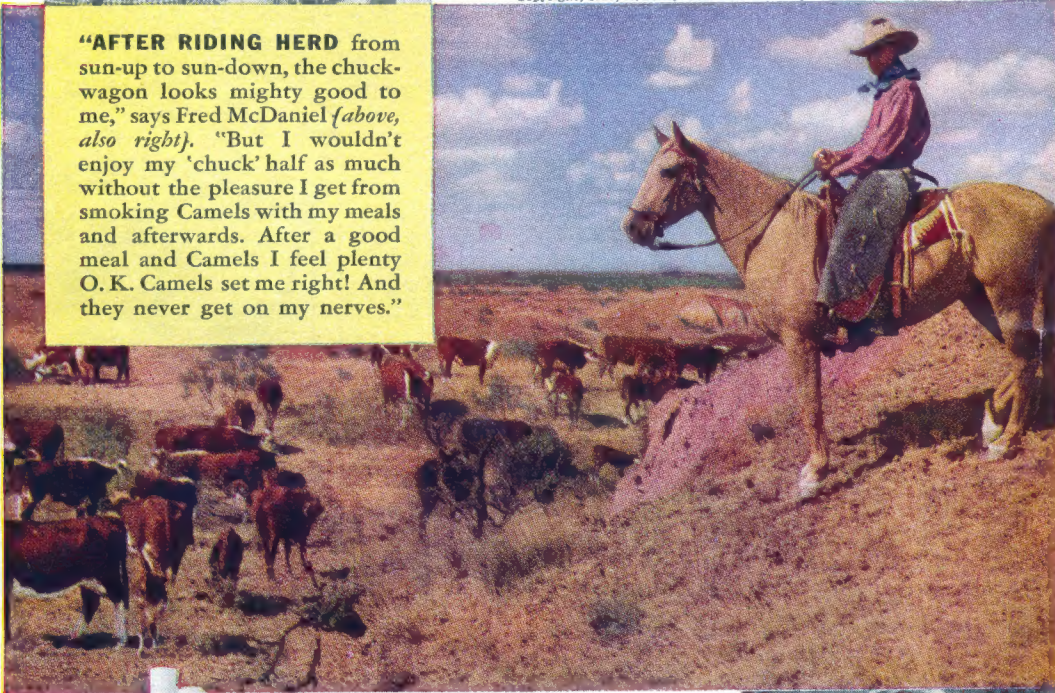


*"For Digestion's Sake
Smoke Camels!"*

**"MIGHTY GOOD ADVICE,"
SAYS THIS
HARD-RIDING TEXAS COW PUNCHER**

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"AFTER RIDING HERD from sun-up to sun-down, the chuck-wagon looks mighty good to me," says Fred McDaniel (*above, also right*). "But I wouldn't enjoy my 'chuck' half as much without the pleasure I get from smoking Camels with my meals and afterwards. After a good meal and Camels I feel plenty O. K. Camels set me right! And they never get on my nerves."



Smoking Camels, you enjoy a sense of greater ease while you're eating, and afterwards too!

WHAT Fred McDaniel says about Camels is backed up 100% by baseball's "Iron Man," Lou Gehrig — by Frank Buck, of "Bring 'Em Back Alive" fame — by Eleanor Tennant, outstanding woman tennis coach of the U. S. — and by millions of other Camel smokers in all walks of life. Enjoy Camels at every meal. They speed up the flow of digestive fluids. Increase alkalinity. Help you *enjoy* food. Camels set you right! They're *the* cigarette for steady smoking. Light up a Camel any time and get an invigorating "lift."



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